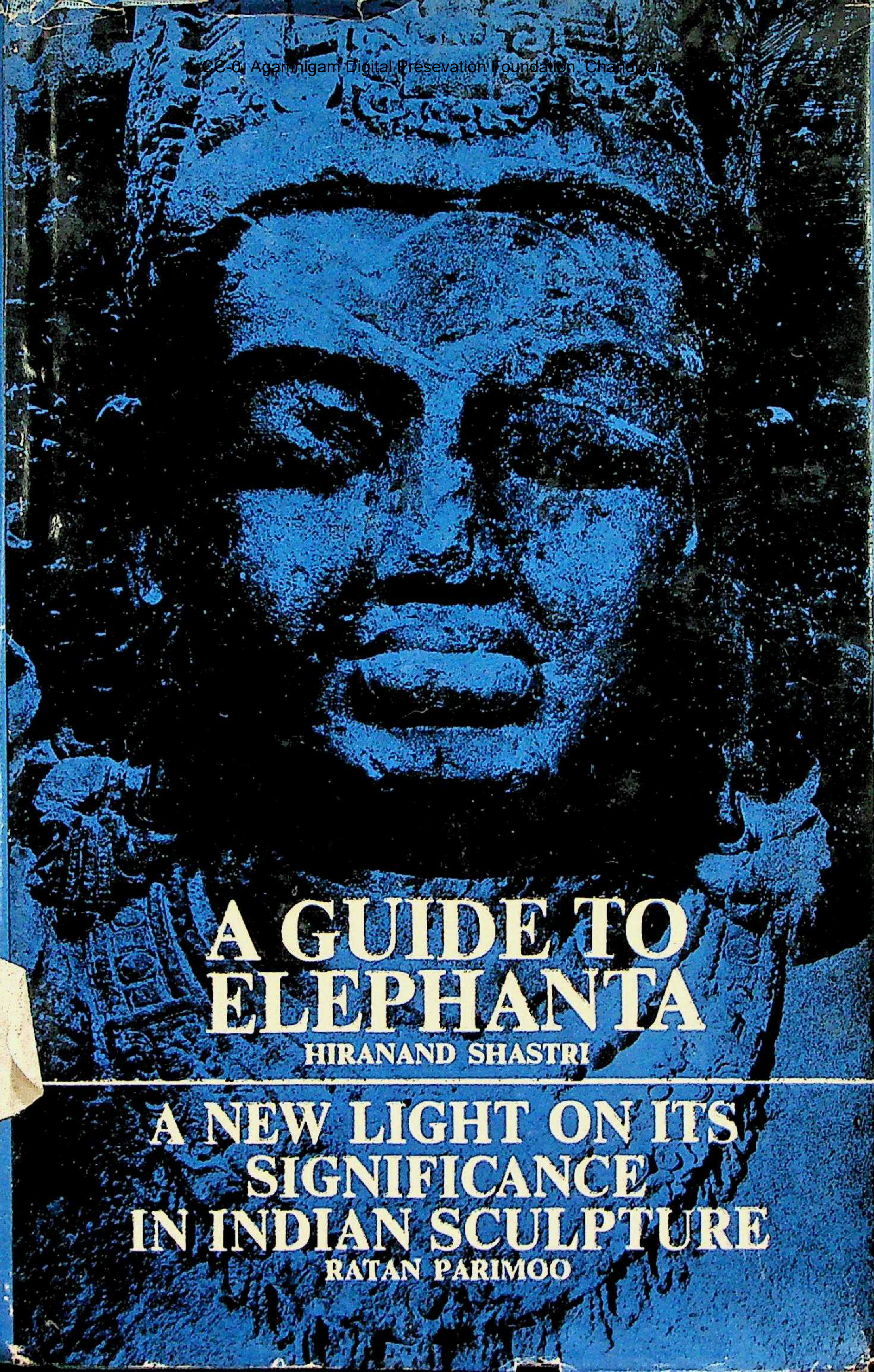

A GUIDE TO ELEPHANTA

HIRANAND SHASTRI

A NEW LIGHT ON ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN INDIAN SCULPTURE

RATAN PARIMOO

A GUIDE TO ELEPHANTA

DR. HIRANAND SHASTRI, M.A., M.O.L., D. LITT.,
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With

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Hiranand Shastri
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PREFACE

The first official guide to Elephanta was The Rock Temples of Elephanta or Gharapuri which was published by the late Dr. Burgess in 1871. The account of the monuments of the Island which is given in the Gazetteer of the Thana District was written later in 1882. This was succeeded, first, by the publication entitled The Guide to Elephanta Island, which was published on the occasion of the visit of Their Imperial Majesties King George V and Queen Mary in 1911, and then, by the pamphlet called The Caves of Elephanta which the Bombay Public Works Department issued in 1914. All these publications—leaving aside the books which are published unofficially or privately—are now out of print and a trustworthy and up-to-date guide to the monuments is needed. The present book is meant to meet that need. Several illustrations of sculptures, a plan of the Main Cave and a map of the Island as well as of its environs are added to assist the visitor. These illustrations are supplied by the Superintendent of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, Poona. The map of the Island of Elephanta is based on his drawing No. 1318; that of its environs is taken from the Imperial Gazetteer Atlas of India (1931), plate No. 55.

In describing the monuments, I am indebted to Dr. Burgess' The Rock Temples of Elephanta or Gharapuri. The information which has been given about the Portuguese accounts is taken principally from the Gazetteer of the Thana District. Other books consulted are named in the footnotes or in the bibliography attached to this Guide.

The caves were excavated about the fifth or the sixth century (A.D.) and, consequently, do not contain any specimens of early Indian art. The Gupta Empire coincides not only with a revival of Hinduism but with a wonderful development in learning and art, which, judging by the works of the period, must have been liberally patronised. Whereas in the early stage, Indian sculptural art was marked by a natural simplicity, in the early mediaeval stage which commenced about the Gupta period and lasted till about the end of the seventh century, it became 'formal' and 'cultured'. It was during this epoch that it reached perfection and produced some specimens which rank high among the world's sculptural masterpieces.

The sculptures of Elephanta are exclusively Brahmanical in origin and supply us with beautiful specimens of early mediaeval Hindu art. There can be no two opinions regarding the decorative side, which is unreservedly praised by all. Opinions differ, however, regarding the formative side or the figure sculpture. The critic, not conversant with Hindu mythology and its underlying idealism, may not be able to fully appreciate the Brahmanical sculpture, especially when it is 'supernatural'. But, one familiar with Hinduism can not but admire and appreciate the beauty and artistic skill of the workmanship. The late Dr. Vincent Smith, in whom 'mediaeval sculpture' seems to have 'aroused a feeling of repulsion', had to admit that it had 'undeniable merits'. One might unhesitatingly say with him that the works of the artists "frequently display high technical skill, great mastery over intractable material, and in the larger compositions, especially those of the western caves, bold imagination and a knowledge of the effects of light and shade. The best specimens of the ascetic type are endowed with serene dignity and convey the impression of perfect repose with extraordinary skill. In the modelling, although realistic representation of the muscles is deliberately avoided, the capacity of the artists to give details, if they were so minded, is attested by the hands, which in many cases are shaped with the utmost delicacy and expressiveness. The energy of passion is sometimes rendered with masterly power, and occasionally, but rarely, facial expression is vividly exhibited". These remarks apply not only to the Brahmanical but also to the Buddhist sculpture. In the case of the Buddhist sculpture, however, we have to remember that the products of the Hinayana school are more lifelike and natural than those of the Mahayanists, whose cult is akin to that of the Hindus of the Tantric school. To the Hinayanist, Gautama Buddha is the sympathetic human teacher who moves about among his disciples and hearers, expounding the Dharma or the Sacred Law, but to the follower of the Mahayana, with its Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, its attendant deities and demons, spacious temples and images, pompous ceremonial and noisy festivals, he is only the ethereal representation of Amitabha, the celestial Buddha of Boundless Light who dwells in Sukhavati or 'the World of the highest happiness'. Mahayanism seems to have flourished about the seventh century (A.D.) and to have greatly influenced Hinduism, just as in its turn it must have been affected by the latter. The tendency to adore the supernatural predominated in the minds of the Mahayanists as well as of the Hindus and found expression in the sculpture which they produced. In the later ages this influence became baneful and made the cult images 'stereotyped and lifeless, mere symbols, as it were, of religion devoid alike of spirituality and of anatomical definition'. The Elephanta sculpture, however, was, to a great extent, free from such an influence, and did not allow mere artificiality or conventional formulae to get the upper hand over real art. It was rather the exercise of his discretion that enabled the sculptor to make the fullest use of his consummate skill and produce some of the beautiful representations we see in the caves of Elephanta, e.g., the figure of the dvarapala standing in a dignified and awe—inspiring pose to guard the entrance to the linga shrine; Nataraja the Divine Dancer, calm and unperturbed in spite of the whole world moving round him; and Parvati overcome with bashfulness at the time of her marriage with Siva.

The Main Cave and its adjuncts were originally adorned with paintings, now lost, save for a few faint traces. The Portuguese accounts would show that they probably resembled the Ajanta paintings in splendour, beauty and artistic execution.

It is very much to be regretted that these beautiful monuments suffered so greatly from ruthless vandalism during the Portuguese occupation of the Island when the caves were used not only as cattle sheds and for storing fodder but as an artillery testing ground by the soldiery. Had this not been the case, they would have been in a much better condition and we would have been better circumstanced to form a truer idea of their pristine beauty.

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CHAPTER I

TOPOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Bombay Presidency is exceptionally rich in interesting cave temples which throw a flood of light on the history of architecture and religion in India. According to the estimate of the late Dr. Burgess, there are not less than 900 excavations of various sorts and dimensions in Western India, the majority of which are within the limits of the Bombay Presidency. Near Bombay itself there are at least 130 caves lying on the islands of Elephanta and Salsette. These excavations are divided into three classes according to the sects to which they belong, namely, Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina. The earliest known examples dating from about the third century B.C. are Buddhist. Brahmanical caves, whether connected with the cult of Siva or of Vishnu, come next in order of time and seem to range from about the fourth to about the eighth century (A.D.). The caves at Elephanta come under this category and are connected with the worship of Siva. Earlier writers attributed them to the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century. This date, however, seems to be too late, for, in codsideration of the technical achievement as well as other reasons given in the sequel, it can reasonably be assumed that they were excavated about the sixth century (A.D.). Plastic art in India, which was at its zenith in the Gupta Period, began to deteriorate during the later ages. This being the case, it becomes doubtful if we could get such sublime images as we find in these caves during the period of its decay.

The island of Elephanta is situated in 18°58′ N. and 72°58½′ E., about seven miles north-east of the Apollo Bandar. It consists of two hills, separated by a narrow valley, and measures about 4.5 miles in circumference. The surface area varies from 6 to 4 square miles according as the tide is at ebb or flow.

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Elephanta is a range of small hills wooded with mango, tamarind, karanda, and other trees. The hill rises gently on the west and, with an irregular outline, stretches east across the ravine, gradually rising at the extreme east to a height of 568 feet above the sea. The foreshore of sand and mud is fringed by mangrove bushes, occasional palms dotting the background of low hills. Palms are also to be seen adorning the hills here and there.

Very few people inhabit the Island, and their chief occupation is to cultivate rice and rear sheep or poultry for sale in the Bombay market.

APPROACHES TO ELEPHANTA

The most convenient way of visiting the caves of Elephanta is by a ferry boat or motor-launch from the Apollo Bandar or by the harbour ferry from the Carnac Bandar. These boats run daily in the afternoon, but on Sundays, the motor-launch goes twice, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. They make the passage in about 2 hours. During the winter season a motor-launch goes to Elephanta from the Apollo Bandar twice daily, first at about 8-30 A.M. and again at about 2-30 P.M. The launches and the ferry-boats land passengers at the modern landing-place which lies towards the north-west side of Elephanta. The caves are about a quarter of a mile from this place and can be reached by easy steps which, according to an inscribed tablet fixed in them, were constructed in 1854 by a merchant named Thakar Karamsi Ranmal Lohana. At the foot of these steps coolies can be engaged to carry visitors in wooden chairs swung on their shoulders. The harbour ferry stops at the old landing-place at Rajghat, lying to the south-west of the Island; whence the caves are reached by a walk of nearly one mile over a fairly good but unmetalled road. (These days there are daily launch services available from the Apollo Bandar which take about an hour to reach the modern landing site on the island. There is a small fee charged for entry into the cave area.)

DESIGNATION OF THE ISLAND

The name Elephanta, by which the Island is now known, originated with the Portuguese who so designated the place after a colossal stone statue of an elephant standing near Rajghat, the landing place. This statue measured 13′ 2″ by 7′ 4″. The head as well as the neck of it dropped off in 1814 and later the remainder of the statue fell to pieces. In 1864, however, the mass of stones comprising the statue was removed to the Victoria Gardens in Bombay where it was re-set. The sketch given by Burgess in the title page of his Rock Temples of Elephanta or Gharapuri is a copy of the drawing which Captain Basil Hall, R.N., prepared in 1814.

OLD DESIGNATION

To the local people, including the boatmen of Bombay, the Island is known by the name of Gharapuri, which may have been the old Hindu designation of it, although there is no known inscriptional or literary evidence to support this hypothesis. What this designation really means is not clear. That the second part of the name, viz., puri, signifies 'town' does not require demonstration. As to the first component, some writers have connected it with the Gharis or Guruvas, the Sudra priests of some Saivite temples. Gharapuri, in that case, would mean the town of the Ghari-priests. But I would connect it with the Prakrit word ghara[1] meaning fort or fortress-wall (=Sanskrit prakara). The name Gharapuri in that case would signify Fortress-city and would be quite an appropriate designation for the Island. From a short inscription, incised on the copper vessel mentioned further on[2], it would appear, however, that about the 11th century (A.D.), the name of the Island was possibly Sripuri, meaning the town of wealth[3].

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[1] See Desinamamala, II. 108.

[2] See p. 22 f.

[3] If 'sri' is only an honorific prefix, the name would mean 'the celebrated town'. This appellation would suggest another derivation — 'ghara' may be a derivative of the Sanskrit root 'ghri', 'to sprinkle'. Gharapuri might have been the city of coronation, in which case Sripuri would be a suitable alternative name.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

EARLY PERIOD

For the early history of the Island we have to depend on tradition alone, as no records which might throw any light on it are now forthcoming. The stone inscription which was removed to Europe about 1540 by the Portuguese Viceroy Dom Joao de Castro, if found and deciphered, might help us in elucidating it. The Portuguese, according to Diogo de Couto, when they took 'Bacain' and its dependencies 'went to this pagoda and removed a famous stone over the entrance that had an inscription of large and well-written characters which was sent to the king, after the Governor of India had in vain endeavoured to find out any Hindu or Moor in the East who would decipher them. And the king D. Joao III also used all his endeavours to the same purpose but without any effect, and the stone thus remained there and now there is no trace of it.' The Thana District Gazetteer[1] speaks of two inscribed copper-plates also, which were found 'in clearing earth in the north-east corner of the Island and are believed to have been in England in the possession of one Mr. Harold Smith, a contractor, who took them there about 1865 A.D.' No information is available as to their contents and the place where they are now preserved.

There are several local traditions or folk-tales connected with the origin of these excavations, but they are of little or no historical value. One of them connects the excavations with the five Pandava heroes of the Mahabharata; another, with the mythical Asura king Bana and his beautiful daughter Usha, while the third ascribes them to Alexander the Great!

EVIDENCE OF INSCRIPTIONS

No history of Elephanta is available and we have to draw inferences regarding it from the very scanty material which may be gathered from a few inscriptions known to us. That Western India formed part of the vast Mauryan Empire during the reign of Asoka is an established historical fact which does not require any corroboration. Elephanta is quite close to the mainland and its very situation would suggest that whosoever governed the coastal regions also governed it. Whether it remained under the uninterrupted sway of the Mauryas even after the break up of the Mauryan Empire it is impossible to affirm with definiteness. Circumstantial evidence, however, would indicate that it probably did so. The Aihole inscription would show that a Maurya dynasty was ruling the west coast of India during the first half of the seventh century after Christ. This[1] document is dated in the 556th year of the Saka era (=634-35 A.D.) and records that Pulakesin II, the successful Chalukya ruler of Western India, sent his hosts to the 'Konkanas' and vanquished the Mauryas there.[2] The term Konkana connotes the whole of the strip[3] of land lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, although it is used in a somewhat limited sense also. That the Konkana[4] Mauryas were conquered by the Early Chalukyas is also recorded in the Kauthem[5] grant of Vikramaditya V dated Saka 931 (=1009 A.D.). The Kanaswa stone inscription[6] of Sivagana which is dated in the Malava year 796 expired (=738-39 A.D.) glorifies the illustrious Maurya race and the king of that lineage named Dhavala, describing him as a 'supreme' ruler. This would show that Mewar and the surrounding tracts were held by a Maurya dynasty during the eighth century after Christ. The Nausari (Baroda State) plates[1] of the Gujarat Chalukya Pulakesiraja, dated in the Kalachuri year 490 (i.e., 739 A.D.), would also show that the Konkana Mauryas must have been ruling in the west of India though they were conquered by the Arabs in the eighth century. These Arabs, who are styled as Tajikas in the document, were, in turn, routed by Avanijanasraya Pulakesiraja. Further, the Vaghli (Khandesh) inscription[2] of the Saka year 991 (=1069 A.D.) mentions a Maurya chief named Govindaraja as a subordinate of the Devagiri Yadava feudatory prince Seunachandra II, and states that the original town of the Mauryas or rather of this branch of the Maurya stock was Valabhi, the modern Wala in Saurashtra or Kathiawar. In view of all these inscriptional records it stands to reason to hold that the country lying round Bombay including the coast of Southern Gujarat was governed by the chiefs of the Maurya lineage even up to the tenth century after Christ.[3]

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[1] Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. XIV, p. 80, f.n. 1.

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[1] In the Appendix to the Mediaeval Temples of the Dakhan (Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. XLVIII, Impl. Series), pp. 79 ff., where several references to Puri are given, mention is made of a copper-plate grant of A.D. 584. In the absence of details it is not known which grant is meant. The statements made in this Appendix regarding Chandadanda require revision.

[2] Ep. Ind., Vol. VI, pp. 1 ff. The 20th stanza of this inscription has been thus rendered by Kielhorn: "In the Konkanas, the impetuous waves of the forces directed by him speedily swept away the rising wavelets of pools — the Mauryas."

[3] Cf. Fleet, Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts, in the Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, part ii, p. 283.

[4] The epithet of Konkana has been used for discrimination. We have "Mauryas" cropping up in other parts of India, long after the Imperial Mauryas; but whether they or these Konkana Mauryas were actually decended from the Imperial Mauryas we do not know for certain.

[5] Ind. Ant. Vol. XVI, pp. 15 ff.

[6] Ibid., Vol. XIX, pp. 55 ff., II. 4-6.

The Aihole inscription to which reference has been made above tells us that Pulakesin II reduced Puri after attacking it 'with hundreds of ships.' This Puri was evidently the capital of the Konkana Mauryas and was praised as 'the Goddess of Fortune of the western Sea.'[4] The identity of this Puri has not yet been determined; but from what this document states about it, it is not unreasonable to surmise that it stood somewhere near or on the sea. Presumably it lay on the Island of Elephanta itself. This Island is rich in ancient remains. A portion of it, now a hamlet standing on the north-eastern-most side of the Island, still bears the name Mora (marked on the accompanying map) which is only a reminiscence of the term Maurya.[1] The old landing-place is still called Rajpuri which reminds us of the Puri of the Aihole inscription. In the year 1579 (A.D.) the Island went by the name of Puri[2]. The inscription incised on the copper-vessel, published in the sequel, mentions the town of S ripuri, which is probably identical with this Puri, for 'sri' can well be taken as only an honorific prefix. Assuming this identity we might say that Elephanta was being governed by the Konkana Mauryas when it was taken by the Chalukyas. From the latter it went to the Rashtrakutas, who defeated the Chalukyas, and thereafter it went to the Chalukyas of Kalyani in the reign of Taila II (cir. 997 A.D.)[3], and from them to the Yadavas. All these dynasties governed the west coast of India one after the other.

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[1] Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, part i, p. 109.

[2] Ep. Ind., Vol. II, p. 224 f.

[3] Cf. Early History of the Deccan, Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, part ii, p. 187 f. n. 10. Apparently the scions of this stock were scattered in different parts of India during different epochs. Hsuan-tsang writes of one Purnavarman whom he mentions as the last descendant of Asoka to occupy the throne of Magadha. (See Watters, On Yuan Chwang, Vol. II, p. 115).

[4] The verse in which this description is given occurs just after the one recording the subjugation of the Mauryas and is thus rendered by Kielhorn:—"When radiant like the destroyer of Pura, he besieged Puri, the Fortune of the western sea, with hundreds of ships in appearance like arrays of rutting elephants, the sky, dark-blue as a young lotus and covered with tiers of massive clouds, resembled the sea, and the sea was like the sky."

LATER MEDIAEVAL OR MUHAMMADAN PERIOD

The Yadava dynasty was vanquished by the Musalman invader[4] about the end of the thirteenth century (A.D.). When Alau-d-din Khilji overthrew the Yadavas in 1294 (A.D.) the Island must have fallen into his hands. During the greater part of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century it was, along with the rest of the coast of Thana, nominally under the Musalman rulers of Ahmedabad.

PORTUGUESE PERIOD

In 1534 the Island passed into the hands of the Portuguese and was rented to one Joao Pires for the annual quit-rent of 105 pardaos.[5] It was under the control of the latter till

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[1] More or Mori is only a tadbhava of Maurya. Cf. Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Vol. I, p. 126, etc.

[2] See p. 11 below.

[3] Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts, Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, part in p. 430.

[4] Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, pp. 114, 115, 121, etc.

[5] According to Webster's New International Dictionary one Pardao = four shillings roughly,

1548, when it passed to Manual Rebello da Silva, who made it over to his daughter, Dona Rosa Maria Manuel d'Almeida.

MARATHA PERIOD

In the year 1682 the Island must have formed part of the Maratha dominion, for, Sambhaji is said to have threatened the Portuguese by fortifying it against them about that time. Even the great Sivaji is believed to have started founding a fort on the top of its main hill, which commands Bombay and also the sea to a great extent.

BRITISH PERIOD

The Island was finally occupied by the British, who took it in December 1774. In connection with the defence of Bombay, a battery of heavy guns was established on the top of the western hill, but the Island is no longer of any military importance.[1]

AGE OF ELEPHANTA SCULPTURES

Assuming that the Puri of the Aihole inscription is the modern Elephanta it will not be unreasonable to infer from what has been stated above that the sculptures of Elephanta were in existence at the time of Pulakesin II, i.e., about the first half of the seventh century A.D. On the evidence of the carnelian seal, described below,[2] a still earlier date might be assigned to them. Their age will go still farther back if the figure, which according to Burgess,[3] Porphyry the Greek scholar and historian (circa 304 A.D.) described in his treaties entitled de Styge, were identical with the representation of Ardhanarisvara-Siva, found in one of the panels[4] of the Main Cave. I am however of the opinion that the sculptures of Elephanta, executed as they are with great artistic skill, belong to a period when Hindu sculpture was at its zenith and were in all probability wrought in the Gupta epoch of Indian history. Plastic art in India began to deteriorate during the later period and could not have produced the fine statues we see in these caves.

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[1] Annual Progress Report of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1907, p. 21.

[2] Page 23.

[3] The Rock Tample of Elephanta, etc., pp. 20. 67-68.

[4] Infra, pp.43 ff.

PRESERVATION

The accounts given by some annalists of Portugal, as recorded by Burgess in his book on Elephanta or in the Thana District Gazetteer, would show that the caves of Elephanta were more or less intact when the Portuguese took possession of the Island in 1534. Dom Joao de Castro saw the caves in 1539 and being struck by their fine execution considered them to be the work of some 'superhuman' agency. In 1550 Garcia d'Orta found them much damaged by cattle. J. H. Van Linschoten visited the Island in 1579 A.D. and described, the caves as deserted and ruined. In his Discourse of Voyages' he mentions the Island by the name of Pory which would show that in the sixteenth century (A.D.) it must have been known by the designation of Puri. According to Diogo de Couto, the caves were further spoiled by the mischievous soldiers at the beginning of the 17th century. Then again in 1673 they further suffered at the hands of the Portuguese who used them as cattle sheds and stored fodder there during the rainy season.[1] In 1712, one of their hidalgoes fired several shots from a big gun into the great cave to divert himself with the echo, and thus broke some of its pillars. Grose (1750) described the caves as water logged. According to him the sculptures were in a tolerable state of preservation untill the arrival of the Portuguese, who were at some pains to maim and deface them, even bringing field pieces to the demolition of the images! Cave No. VI, which lies on the eastern hill, then served as a Christian Church. In 1865 the noses of two of the faces of the Mahesamurti (miscalled Trimurti) figure are said to have been damaged.

ELEPHANTA IN MODERN TIME

From the time it was occupied by the British in 1774, a small garrison was maintained on the Island for many years in connection with the harbour defences and the caves were then under the military authorities. In 1875, King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, was entertained here at a banquet.[1] From 1890 the Public Works Department began to look after the monuments and take steps to arrest the progress of further decay. Many of the pillars, which were in a parlous condition, were strengthened and repaired, though a good deal of what was desirable from an archaeological point of view could not be accomplished. In 1909, the monuments of the Island were declared "Protected" under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act. Since then they are being conserved with necessary care by the Indian Archaeological Department.

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[1] See Burgess, The Rock Temples of Elephanta, etc., pp. 53 ff., and Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. XIV, p. 84.

[1] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, Vol. IX, p. 261.

CHAPTER III

ART

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCULPTURAL ART IN INDIA

The sculptural art of ancient India is usually believed to have commenced in the reign of Asoka, the great Mauryan Emperor, whose rule lasted from cir. 273 to cir. 232 B.C., though we may yet discover evidence of an even earlier date. Like other kindred branches of art, it has undergone three phases of development: the initial stage, the stage of perfection and the stage of decay[1]. Each of these stages is marked by distinguishing features and may be assigned to different schools of thought. Chronologically these schools may be termed Early, Mediaeval and Late. For the sake of convenience we might ascribe them to periods ranging from the third century B.C. to the third century after Christ, then from the fourth to the eighth century A.D. and, lastly, from the ninth to the twelfth century A.D. Here we are not concerned with the art of the period preceding the Mauryan epoch; nor have we much to do with the products of the times which followed the twelfth century A.D. The plastic art of ancient India began to deteriorate in the thirteenth century A.D.

EARLY PERIOD

The Early school of sculpture was at its best during the ascendancy of the Andhras in the first century B.C. The sculptures of Elephanta contain no specimens of this school. They came into existence long afterwards. Yet it is necessary to know the characteristic features of the early period so that the sculptural products of the Mediaeval school may be properly appreciated. The keynotes of the Early school, in brief, were the natural simplicity and the transparent sincerity with which the sculptor narrated the legends in the expressive language of the chisel in order to glorify religion. It is because of this simplicity that the products of the early period still appeal to our feelings.

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[1] This devision is to be treated as conventional.

MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

The Mediaeval school flourished during the Gupta period, commonly held to have lasted from about 350 to about 650 A.D. During this epoch sculptural art in India reached the stage of perfection. A comparison of the products of the Early and the Mediaeval schools would show that during the Gupta age sculptural art became "cultured, more formal, more self-conscious and more complex," and that whereas the Early school took the formulative side as a mere medium to narrate religious stories, the Mediaeval school established a closer contact of thought with art and required the sculptor to be much more artistic and to pay greater attention to the technique in order to make his work realistic and lifelike. And the Mediaeval school was wonderfully successful in producing beautiful specimens not only well defined and symmetrical in outline but also remarkably expressive of modesty, calm contemplation and repose. Some of the best figure-sculptures left to us, such as Buddha image at Sarnath near Benares, the Vishnu and Siva images at Deogarh in the Lalitpur sub-division of the Jhansi district in the United Provinces, the imposing relief at Ellora and the magnificent sculptures of Elephanta, are the outcome of this school.

RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM

The Gupta epoch was marked by the "Renaissance" of arts in India and a general outburst of the mental activity of her people, perhaps never equalled before or since. During this age, not only was the country prosperous and learning in all its branches encouraged, but arts and crafts were patronised on all sides and a great impetus imparted to the religious activities of the people. The Gupta Emperors like Samudragupta or his son Chandragupta, great patrons of Brahmanism as they were, revived the old rites or ceremonies and yajnas like the Asvamedha which had remained forgotten for a very long time. Their personal encouragement must have led to the complete revival of Hinduism, so lucidly reflected in the sculptures of the period. These potent rulers were no doubt officially Brahmanical Hindus, but according to the custom prevalent in ancient India, they looked on every Indian religion with a favourable eye. In spite of their toleration, however, Buddhism suffered a gradual decay during their ascendancy, as is evidenced by the accounts of Fa-hien and Hsuan-tsang, the well-known Chinese pilgrims, who came to India about this time.

Two main sects of Hinduism and their influence on Indian art

Hinduism has two main branches or sects, namely, Vaishnavism and Saivism. The former regards Vishnu and the latter, Siva, as the Supreme Lord. Though both these sects have, in their turn, contributed largely to the development of plastic art, yet it is rather the latter, i.e., Saivism, which has added a new chapter to its history by producing some of the best cave temples and sculptures in India. The caves of Elephanta, also were the outcome of the activities of this branch of Hinduism.

Main features of Elephanta sculpture

As has been noted before, the sculptures of Elephanta possess most of the distinguishing features of the Mediaeval period. Some of the colossal figures seen in these caves are marked by reasoned restraint of ornament and a definition of detail as well as 'vitality', which the products of the later period do not possess.

PAINTINGS IN THE CAVES

The Main Cave and its adjuncts were originally decorated with paintings which have now disappeared. Had they been preserved, the Elephanta sculptures would have given us beautiful examples not only of plastic art but of the art of painting as well. The traces of these paintings still to be seen in the ceilings of the Main Cave and elsewhere are noted in the sequel, where their description as supplied by the Portuguese and other eye-witnesses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is given.

Comparison of Elephanta sculptures with Ellora reliefs

The caves of Elephanta give us some of the best specimens of Brahmanical or Hindu arts, the equal of which is not easily found elsewhere. The imposing reliefs of Ellora, like the Bhairava figure in the Dasavatara temple representing the rescue of Markandeya by Siva, also furnish us with similar examples, but it is doubtful if they can rank with the best figures we see in the caves of Elephanta, such as the representations of Nataraja and of Sadasiva. The Ellora sculptures are 'less accomplished in technique, though more florid in style', and on that account seem to belong to a somewhat later period.

Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures of the Mediaeval Period

It may not be out of place here to draw a very brief comparison between the Buddhist and the Hindu sculpture of the Mediaeval period. There is a great deal of similarity in the technique or artistic skill of both. So far as the 'ascetic ideal' is concerned, the Saiva and the Buddhist sculptures have much in common, for, the Buddha, like Siva, was also a mahayogin, i.e., a great ascetic. Siva and his deeds were the theme of the Saivite sculpture just as the Buddha and the legends connected with his previous births form the main subject of the Buddhist sculpture. Siva is the personification of the 'ascetic life' and of the 'Supreme Knowledge' without which moksha or final emancipation cannot be gained. By nature he is a yogin or ascetic and, consequently, the incidents of his life could only be few. His incarnations were not so multifarious as those of Vishnu, who, to relieve the gods as well as human beings of their distress, had to manifest himself in more numerous forms or avataras than Siva. The Buddha was also an ascetic par excellence, but before he attained Bodhi (or Enlightenment) he had to undergo countless metempsychoses giving rise to the Jatakas or birth stories, a number of which have been so beautifully depicted in the well-known reliefs at Bharhut, Sanchi and other places. The result was that the artist, having the 'ascetic ideal' to follow, did not get as large a scope to represent the myths of Siva as he did in the case of Vishnu or, more especially, of the Buddha. Saiva sculpture would, therefore, either represent the god as a great ascetic and give the myths connected with his creative as well as destructive powers, or would tell the popular stories of Siva or of his consort Parvati. Like the ideal yogin or ascetic, he is represented as wrapped up in meditation, regardless of what was going on around and even forgetful of Parvati. The Buddha is also shown similarly absorbed in contemplation at the time when he assumed 'the adamantine pose' with the firm resolve not to get up till he attained Bodhi, i.e., Supreme Knowledge. The Buddhist sculptures, especially of the Hinayana school, where the Buddha figures as a historical personage, are much more realistic or natural than the Brahmanical ones. The products of the Mahayana school of thought, on the other hand, are cumbered with conventionalities and artificialities, as are the Brahmanical sculptures. Like the latter, they too are tinged with supernatural or transcendental features, such as multitudinous arms, heads, etc. These features gradually became more and more predominant, the result being that the Buddhist as well as the Hindu sculptures became after the twelfth century (A.D.) merely lifeless symbols of religion devoid of any spirituality.

SYMBOLICAL INTERPRETATION OF SOME OF THE ELEPHANTA SCULPTURES

The sculptures of Elephanta owed their origin to Saivism, and they therefore illustrate and reflect the lofty idealism as well as the intellectuality of the early Saiva philosophy. To understand and appraise them at their real artistic value, some knowledge of Hindu mythology and metaphysics is indispensable. We may take some examples. The first panel to our left when we enter the Main Cave, gives a beautiful representation of Siva as the yogin or ascetic absorbed in meditation. In his destructive aspect he is shown as the killer of Andhaka, the personification of darkness or ignorance that blinds human beings and is vanquished only by the trident of light or knowledge. The Mahesamurti figure, miscalled Trimurti, which is one of the finest reliefs in all India and, evidently, the principal sculpture in the Main Cave, is a vivid expression of the unification of the three different aspects of the Supreme Being. It shows Siva not only as the Destroyer but also as the Creator and the Preserver of the Universe. The face that represents him as the Preserver is marked by a repose, seldom met with in other sculptures. As the great Creater he is very powerfully depicted in the first panel to our right. The sculpture represents him as Nataraja and visualises his mystic dance of creation. The god is here shown as setting the whole universe in motion, himself remaining unperturbed. The wild movements of his limbs, the waving of the arms and the legs as shown in the sculpture, are markedly contrasted with the serenity and dispassionateness so vividly expressed in the face. The vigour and the skill with which the artist has brought out this contrast would have been still more striking had the mineral colours decorating the carvings been preserved in their original beauty. The idea depicted in the panel is one of the most inspired and majestic conceptions of Hindu art, and the image of Siva, as drawn in it, is undoubtedly a work of consummate skill.

CHAPTER IV

ANCIENT RELICS FOUND ON THE ISLAND

STONE HORSE

Besides the stone elephant and the inscriptions mentioned before several minor remains of considerable interest have been found on the Island. Of these, the stone horse deserves first mention although it is now irretrievably lost. It stood somewhere on the eastern ridge of the hills, near the top of the ravine where the hills draw close together, and was probably carved out of a block of trap. Dr. Fryer noticed it in 1675. Ovington (1690) described it more fully, though perhaps less accurately, as "so lively, with such a colour and carriage, and the shape finished with that exactness that many have fancied it, at a distance, a living animal, rather than only a bare representation''. Pyke in 1712 called it Alexander's Horse and gave a drawing of it showing a stiff zebra-like animal whose lower part was not cut out of the rock. According to Hamilton (1720) it was not so well-shaped as the elephant. It seems to have disappeared during the following forty or fifty years, as neither du Perron (1760) nor Niebuhr (1764) remarked upon it in their accounts of the Island.

REMAINS ON THE EASTERN HILL

Among the remains[1] on the estern hill, besides the two caves and the water cisterns, the solid brick structure, which stands above them at a height of about 560 feet is of importance. In 1882, Mr. Henry Cousens, the then Superintendent of Archaeology, Western Circle, examined it by sinking a shaft in the middle but without any definite results. Further examination is needed to ascertain its real character. It may have a Buddhist stupa, and the water-cisterns below it might have belonged to the monastery attached to it.[1] The bricks with which it was constructed measure about 15 in.×9 in.×2½ in. and show that it was constructed about the Gupta period (cir. 5th century A.D.).

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[1] See the Map.

STONE IMAGE OF SADASIVA

Amongst the movable antiquities found on the Island, the fragmentary stone image of Sadasiva,[2] now deposited in the Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay, is specially noteworthy. It is executed with great artistic skill and is called by some art critics a masterpiece of Indian sculptural genius. The pedestal which we see detached in the photograph at the end possibly belonged to it. There is a much-worn Kanarese inscription incised on this pedestal which, on palaeographic grounds, can be assigned to about the ninth century (A.D.).

The extant portion of the record reads:

Baladari pratishtha Siva ... rsamikami,

meaning:

"consecrated by Baladari ... Siva of".

The mention of Siva in the inscription would lend strong support to the identification of the sculpture with Siva. In an article by S.N. Chakravarti (The image of Brahma from Elephanta, LALITKALA, ½, 1955/56) this image has been definitely proved to be that of Brahma.

SOME OTHER RELICS

Of the other portable antiquities which were found on the Island, including the fragmentary stone images of Vishnu and of Mahishasuramarddini, which are also preserved in the aforesaid institution at Bombay, two deserve special mention. One is a copper jar, found in the silt of the large cistern lying in the west wing of the Main Cave. On its neck there is a short Devanagari inscription, in corrupt Sanskrit, reading:

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[1] It is taken to be a watch-tower in the Annual Progress Report of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1901, p. 9.

[2] It is incorrect to take it as the representation of Brahma, the god of creation, and theorise that the Main Cave was a temple of Brahma and that the figure was originally enshrined in the Main Cave and that the linga which is now found there was put in afterwards: See Mr. Havell's Ancient and Mediaeval Architecture of India: A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilisation, p. 160.

> [Om?] Samvat 114[3 Ksha]ya-samvasva(tsa) re Chaitra-sudha (sudi) 14 Sripuri[1]-vina(sha)ye-tra Sri-Jogesvani(ri)-devyah tansa(mra)palai[h*] 194 lohikrittah(tah)[॥]

It may be translated thus :

> In the Samvat year 1143, the cyclic year Kshaya, on the 14th day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra here in the district (?) of Sripuri of the goddess Jogesvari (this vessel) was made of 194 palas of copper.

The date given in this record corresponds to Wednesday, the 15th April, 1086 A.D. On account of its being easily portable it cannot be stated definitely whether the vessel originally belonged to the cave or was brought from outside. But as it came from the cistern, it may not have been extraneous. It was used for taking out water and, apparently, fell into the reservoir whence it was removed. As stated before, we cannot say with certainty whether the name of the locality was Puri or Sripuri. Assuming that the vessel belonged to the cave, the record makes it very probable that the place went by the name of Sripuri about the 11th century after Christ. The word Jogesvari occurring in the inscription reminds us of the Yogesvari caves in the Thana district and would lead to the surmise that both these excavations were under one control.

CARNELIAN SEAL

A similar relic is a small seal, which according to Burgess[2], was dug out in 1869. It is stated to be an oval light ruby coloured carnelian tablet measuring 0.435 in. long and 0.35 in. broad. The face is an ellipse measuring 0.37 by 0.26 inch and bears the legend 'Narayana' engraved on it in letters of the 5th or 6th century A.D. It was in the possession of the late Dr. Bhau Dagi when Burgess published an account of it, but where it is now is not known.

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[1] The word which follows Sripuri actually reads vinaye, but has been corrected into vishaye, meaning 'in the district or division of'. If it is taken as it stands in the inscription, i.e., as vinaye, it can be rendered by 'in the jurisdiction of'.

[2] Rock Temples of Elephanta or Gharapuri, p. 80.

CHAPTER V

THE MAIN CAVE

General Description

Of all the excavations to be seen on the Island of Elephanta, the Main or Great Cave (marked No. 1 on the map at the end) is the most important. It lies on the western hill of the Island at an elevation of about 250 feet above the sea level. In front of it, a paved open terrace, about 80 yards long and 40 yards broad, shaded by large nim trees and commanding a fine view, stretches to the north-east. The entrance to the cave has recently been enclosed by an open railing. On either side a rocky bank rises to a rugged tree-fringed front, about 40 feet high. The cave hewn out of a hard compact species of trap rock, has three openings, one on the north, another on the east and the third on the western side, thus giving ample light to the interior. The principal entrance, indeed the only one that can now be said to be quite open, faces north. Over its front, across the whole breadth, ran the caves, about 4 feet deep, which have now disappeared together with the two front pillars. The cave consists of a central hall and four aisles or vestibules. From the front or north entrance to the back, it measures about 130 feet, and its length from the east to the west entrance is also approximately the same. The porticoes on the three sides are about 54 feet long and 16½ feet deep. The depth as well as the height varies on the east and west sides. The body of the cave is supported by six rows of columns, six in each row, except at the corners on the west side, where the uniformity is broken to make room for the shrine. These columns seem to differ not only in size and shape but even in their principal details. Actual measurement shows that no two of them stand in a line. The noteworthy feature these columns possess is the fluted or pot-shaped capital with which they are adorned.

In this decoration they closely resemble the columns found in some of the caves at Ellora.

Each of the porticoes has two pillars and two pilasters. The main columns are very massive and originally numbered twenty-six, besides the sixteen which are attached to them. Eight have been destroyed and the others are much injured. As neither the floor nor the roof is perfectly horizontal, they vary in height from 15 to 17 feet.

SIVA AS NATARAJA OR THE KING OF DANCERS

We now proceed to examine the sculptures in the cave. Starting from the right side, the principal figure in this compartment (marked A on the plan) which is first seen is Siva, shown as Nataraja or the 'King of Dancers'. The compartment is raised on a low base and is 10 feet 9 inches wide and 13 feet deep, the height being 11 feet 2 inches. The central figure must have been about 10 feet 8 inches in height and seems to have suffered a good deal during the past century. From the account of Dr. W. Hunter it would appear that the first right and the third left hand were entire in 1873. Now only the fourth left hand remains. This figure of Nataraja seems to have had eight arms. The first right arm, perhaps, passed across the body and came to the left side about the waist, and the second was thrown out from the body, the fore-arm being bent so as to bring the hand before the breast. Now it is broken beyond the elbow. The third fore-arm is entirely gone; it probably held a parasu or battle-axe, with a cobra, the rod of the axe being touched by the fourth arm which is bent upwards; the hand is broken off. The first two arms on the left side were probably hanging down though they are now broken off near the wrists; the third is bent upwards but similarly damaged; the fourth is extended above the shoulder and seems to hold up a portion of the robe. The right thigh is bent outward but broken off near the knee, and the left leg is entirely gone. The armlets, which have been elaborately wrought, are still sharp and distinct, as is also the belt round the waist tied at the side, with its end fastened to a part of the robe spread over the right thigh.

To the left of Siva is the figure of Parvati, 6 feet 9 inches in height. Her face, bosom and hands are damaged and she wears

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large ear-rings, broad ornamented armlets, a girdle with carefully carved drapery and a thick necklace from which hangs a pendant. To the right side of Siva is to be seen a well-cut and almost complete figure of Ganesa, the elephant-headed god, holding a parasu or axe in his right hand and possibly a broken tusk in the left hand. A little below him is the skeleton form of Bhringi, the devoted attendant of Siva, shown in the same dancing posture as his master. Beyond it, towards the proper right, is a large male figure with a high cap, having a crescent and a skull with a snake emerging from it. The sakti or spear held in the right hand would show that it represents Kumara, the commander-in-chief of the gods. In front of him is a sitting figure probably of the musician Tandu, the disciple of Siva and Bharata's teacher in the art of dancing, supposed to be the originator of the frantic dance called Tandava. To the left of Kumara stands a damaged female figure whose dress has been carefully and sharply cut. The head is mutilated. The legs, as well as the fore-arms, are completely gone.

Above this group is Brahma, the god of creation. He has four faces, and is carried by five hamsas, or swans. His front and rear right hands and also the front left hand are broken. The rear left hand has an ajya-patra or sacrificial vessel for holding ghee or clarified butter. Between Brahma and the head of Siva are three flying figures, a male between two females, representing some celestials. A similar group is shown on the opposite side as well. Behind Brahma are two standing figures, one of which, with hair gathered up, seems to be some rishi or ascetic. Above the right shoulder of Parvati, Vishnu is shown riding his vehicle Garuda, whose head is gone. In one hand Vishnu holds the gada or mace, and in the other, the sankha or conch. Over Parvati's left shoulder Indra, riding his elephant Airavata, is to be seen. The damaged figure behind Vishnu, which holds a water vessel or kamandalu, perhaps represents ascetic similar to the one on the opposite side.

ANDHAKASURA VADHAMURTI-SIVA

The next panel represents Siva as the killer of the demon Andhaka and is one of the finest specimens of sculpture of the period to which the cave belongs. The principal figure has measures about 11½ feet in height and has a high and profusely carved head-dress showing a skull, a cobra and a crescent over the forhead. The expression of the face is fierce and passionate; the jaws are set and the tusks project downwards from the corners of the mouth. The eyes are large and apparently swollen with rage. Over the left shoulder and across the thighs hangs a rundamala or garland of skulls. Siva is here represented with eight arms, though five of them are now mutilated as are both the legs. The front right and left hands were broken by the Portuguese in the 16th century and the others have suffered since. All the arms have ornaments below the shoulders and bracelets on the wrists. The second right hand wields a long sword ready to strike; the third holds some indistinct object, while the fourth is broken a little above the elbow. The second left hand holds a bowl under the victim Andhaka who is seen pierced through by the trisula or trident, the terrible weapon of Siva, while the third holds a bell to intimate the moment when the fatal blow is to be struck at the victim. The fourth left arm is now broken; with the corresponding right arm, it must have held the gaja-charma or elephant's hide, the raiment of Siva, who in consequence of his wearing it is called Krittivasas (=covered with skin). Here it looks like a screen or background, but the head of the elephant shown by the side of the god and the story given below would make it quite clear that it could be nothing else. Siva wraps the hide round his loins. But here, he is represented in a state of frenzied excitement and is flourishing it in the air. The legend connected with this sculpture is thus described in the Puranas:

Andhaka, one of the sons of Kasyapa by his wife Diti, was a powerful king of the Asuras or demons. Through his austere penance he propitiated Brahma and got several boons from him. Owing to these boons he became invincible and worsted the gods at every step. Thereupon the gods approached Siva and complained to him of their woes. While Siva was listening to their troubles, Andhaka came to Kailasa to carry off Parvati. Siva was enraged at his audacity and got ready to fight and vanquish him. At that very time, Nila, another demon, assumed the form of an elephant and secretly approached Siva to kill him. Nandin, the devoted attendant of Siva came to know of this and informed Virabhadra, who assumed the shape of a lion and killed Nila. The skin of this elephant was presented by Virabhadra to Siva. Thereafter, Siva set out with his ganas or attendants as well as Vishnu and other gods to kill Andhaka. He struck the asura with his arrow and blood began to flow profusely from the wound caused by it. Each drop of the blood, as it touched the earth, gave rise to another Andhaka demon. Thus there arose thousands of such demons to fight against Siva and the other gods who helped him. Thereupon Siva thrust his trisula or trident into the body of the original and real Andhaka demon and began to dance. With his chakra or discus Vishnu started cutting down the secondary asuras or demons produced from the drops of the blood of the principal one. To stop the blood from falling on the earth Siva created the Sakti, called Yogesvari, and other gods also sent out their Saktis or energies in female forms, characterised by their attributes, to catch all the drops of blood as they fell from the demon and stop further multiplication of the secondary Andhakas. Finally, the demon lost his vitality and was vanquished by Siva, who consequently became known as Andhaka-ripu or the enemy (i.e., killer) of Andhaka.

The figures below the principal one are badly mutilated. To the right are seen fragments of three forms — one male and two female — and above them two rishis or ascetics with a small figure in front, and above it, a female figure. Opposite this group, on the left, are some traces of figures of dwarfs. A small figure peeping over the elephant's head is also visible.

The top of the panel is occupied by an interesting relief. In the centre of it, and immediately above the head of Siva, is a peculiar piece of carving, somewhat resembling a stupa with a curved groove in the middle. It is held by two flying figures and is flanked by two worshippers, one on each side. Possibly this carving represents a Siva shrine with a linga standing in the centre. At the extremities of the relief divine couples (mithunas) are portrayed. The ceiling of this aisle still bears the traces of painting which, probably, at first decorated the whole cave.

SIVA SHRINE

A few paces from this compartment bring us to the north door of an interesting linga shrine, marked C on the plan, at the end, which stands in the west aisle, enclosed by four columns of the cave. It is a plain cubical cell and has four doors which face the principal directions. Each of these doors is approached by a flight of six steps which had to be provided as the floor of the shrine was higher than that of the central hall of the cave by about 3½ feet. The doors have plain jambs with two bands around them. Inside, both in the floor and the roof, are the sockets for the door-posts which are now lost. On either side of each door we see the figure of a dvarapala or door-keeper standing majestically. These figures are eight in number and vary in height from 14 feet 10 inches to 15 feet 2 inches. Some of them have also a dwarf attendant. All the door-keepers are crowned with a beautifully designed and exquisitely carved head-gear, a very prominent and attractive feature of these figures. The head-dress is shown as made up of the twists of matted hair in the form of a tall cap which is technically termed jatamukuta. Of these eight dvarapala figures, only one, at the south-east corner, is in a fair state of preservation. It is marked with a large human skull carved in front of its head-gear. The parted lips show the teeth. The figure is decorated with plain armlets and wristlets. A ball-like object is held in the right hand, which is up-turned and placed opposite the navel. The left hand rests on the knot of the robe outside the thigh, as is also the case in the other figures. The folds of the robe hanging behind the left leg of the dvarapala on the south side of the east door are remarkably well cut. Each door-keeper wears a necklace of beads, and several of them are decorated with well-designed and carefully carved breast ornaments. The one on the western side of the southern entrance seems to have two letters cut underneath the right arm which may be read as 'Siva'. They were, apparently, incised later.

The sanctum sanctorum is plain on the inside, no two sides of it being equal in their measurements. In the middle stands a pitha or pedestal which is 9 feet 9 inches square and about 3 feet high. In the centre of the pedestal there is a large hole in which a linga, cut from a stone of a harder and closer grain than that of the caves, has been fitted. The lower end of the linga is square but the upper portion is circular and measures about 2 feet 11½ inches in length. There are deep holes cut at each of the four corners of the altar which must have been used to fix an awning over the linga. In the compound outside, a big fair is held every year in February, on the occasion of the celebrated festival of Mahasivaratri, when the votaries of Siva visit Elephanta in large numbers to worship this linga.

The linga is the mysterious symbol of Siva and represents the energy or the source of the generative power in nature. It is the principal idol, the central object of adoration in Siva temples. The worship offered to this symbol consists in bathing it with water or milk or with both, besmearing it with ghee and sandal-wood paste, presenting bilva (Aegle Marmelos) leaves and flowers to it, and also burning incense before it with the chanting of mantras or hymns.

WESTERN COURT

Turning to the west and descending by a flight of steps to the court-yard below, a much decayed circular platform is to be seen directly in front of the shrine just described. It must have formed the base for the figure of Nandin, the celebrated vahana or vehicle of Siva, which is now lost (see plan).

LARGE WATER CISTERN

To the south of the court-yard, there is a spacious water-cistern, 66 feet 3 inches long, 55 feet 6 inches wide and some 17 feet deep. A portion of the rock and the floor of the porch to the north-west seem to have fallen down and blocked the cistern some time ago. In 1924-25 the reservoir was cleared out and refilled with rain water. At the time of its clearance the above-noticed inscribed copper-jar, some fragments of sculptures, a number of earthen pots and a set of six bell-metal dishes were found. All these antiquities are now deposited in the Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay.

SIVA SHRINE IN THE WESTERN COURT AND ITS SCULPTURED PANELS

By the side of this cistern we see another small linga-shrine which is furnished with a portico, measuring about 27 feet long, 13 feet 7 inches deep and 8 feet 10 inches high, and supported by two square pillars and as many pilasters, now destroyed. We enter the portico by a flight of steps. At the north end of it is a group of figures somewhat similar to those in the left or eastern recess, marked N in the plan, at the north entrance to the Main Cave. In the centre is Siva seated on a lotus throne, held up by two figures, probably Nagas, marked with heavy wigs, and with bodies shown up to the middle only. The left hand of Siva rests on his thigh; the right one is slightly raised. The arms are broken. Though the attributes are not clear, a comparison with similar sculptures elsewhere would show that Siva is here represented as Lakulisa (the Master or Wielder of the lakula or club). To his right there is a seated figure holding a plantain. A bearded ascetic is seen behind him. A similar seated figure is shown on the left. Above this there is an image of Brahma with some flying attendants on each side.

A door at the back of this portico leads into the shrine which measures about 10 feet 7 inches by 9 feet 7 inches. In the centre is a linga fixed in a roughly cut altar. On each side of the door is a dvarapala or warder with two demons at his feet and two fat flying figures above his shoulders. To the south of this door, that is, towards the left side of the visitor, is a group of figures in which Siva performing the Tandava dance is most prominent. Here the god is represented as having six arms and three eyes, his high crown being ornamented with a crescent. The three right hands are mutilated. The front one must have held a cobra, and the one behind it, a club. The front left hand seems to hold the drapery, the object in the second is defaced, while the third hand is extended in the varada-mudra or gift-bestowing pose, the palm being turned upwards. To his right side is a plantain tree with a figure sitting on the ground. Above is carved Brahma, the god of creation sitting on a lotus borne by a swan, his typical emblem and vehicle. To the left of Brahma is a figure, which represents Yama, the god of death, riding a buffalo with a bell fastened to its neck. Near the front left arm of Siva is to be seen a female figure, possibly Parvati, wearing a neatly looped head-dress with a jewel on her forehead. Above her left shoulder is Indra, the king of gods, sitting on his elephant Airavata. Behind him is Vishnu, with four arms, holding the chakra or discus in his second left hand and riding his vehicle Garuda. In front of Garuda's wing is a small flying figure, and below, a male figure with a crescent.

The figures carved in the facade of this shrine are crude compared with those in the Main Cave and seem to be later imitations.

To the north of this shrine, a little above the drain, a small water-cistern has very recently been opened.

KALYANASUNDARAMURTI-SIVA, (MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI)

Returning to the Main Cave, we come to the beautifully carved but much damaged panel (marked D on the plan) representing the marriage of Siva and Parvati. The figure of Siva is 10 feet 10 inches high. Out of the four hands only the front left one is entire. The right leg is also missing. The god is here represented as having an oval nimbus behind the head and wearing the usual high jatamukuta or head-gear. He is putting on a girdle and a robe that comes over his right hip and is knotted at the left side. His left hand rests on the knot of the robe, the ends of which hang loosely. His yajnopavita or sacred thread hangs from his left shoulder and passes to the right thigh. His front right arm is stretched to receive in marriage the hand of Parvati, which is broken. The face is smiling.

To the right of Siva we see the graceful figure of the goddess Parvati measuring 8½ feet in height. She is not yet wedded and therefore is shown on the right side. According to the Hindu or Brahmanical custom the wife should occupy during ceremonial functions the left side of her husband. Excepting the legs and arms which are badly mutilated, the figure is fairly preserved. The hair of Parvati is shown as escaping in small curls from under the broad jewelled fillet, and behind her head is shown a disc which seems to form a part of her dress. She wears heavy ear-rings and necklaces, from one of which a string hangs down on her bosom and ends in a tassel. The whole figure is of striking beauty enhanced by the slightly inclined head and the bashful look. Behind her is to be seen the figure of a well-built man, possibly her father, Himalaya, whose right hand is on her right arm while the left holds up a necklace near Parvati's left ear. His high cap and dress have been carved with more than usual minuteness. Though both the hands of Parvati are broken, yet it would appear that her right hand was placed in the right hand of Siva. Owing to its remarkable grace and symmetry the figure can be placed among the best sculptures of the early mediaeval period.

To the left of Siva is a much defaced figure of Brahma, sitting on his haunches, seeming to officiate as the chief priest in the marriage ceremony. Behind him stands Vishnu with four hands and a peculiar cylindrical cap. His front right hand appears to hold a lotus, and the back left hand, the chakra or quoit. The other two hands are missing.

Towards the right side of Parvati, there stands a female with a fly whisk in her right hand and a well-carved large drum in front. She is wearing necklaces as well as pendant ear-rings and holds a part of Parvati's robe in her left hand. But for the fly-whisk befitting a maid-servant, she could well represent Parvati's mother Menaka. Behind her is a male figure with a plain cap and curled hair and also a large vessel of water, evidently meant for being used in the marriage ceremony. The crescent indicates that he is Chandra, the Moon-god.

On each side of the head of Siva, we see flying celestial mithunas and ascetics extolling the married couple.

GANGADHARA-SIVA (DESCENT OF THE GANGES)

The next compartment encloses a colossal panel of rare workmanship representing Siva as Gangadhara, i.e., as carrying the river Ganga. This has been marked E on the accompanying plan. The legend connected with the scene depicted in this sculpture is as follows:

Sagara, a mighty king of the Ikshvaku dynasty, had sixty thougand sons by one of his wives called Sumati. All these sons were very wicked and incurred the displeasure of the gods by their evil ways. When Sagara wanted to perform an asvamedha or horse sacrifice, he let loose a horse which Indra, the king of gods, stole away and tied in the hermitage of the great sage Kapila, without the latter's knowledge. The wicked sons of Sagara traced the horse to the hermitage, and mistaking the sage Kapila for the thief, tried to attack him, but were burnt to ashes by his wrath. Sagara, finding that his sons did not return with the horse, sent his grandson Amsumat, the son of Asamanjas, to search for them. Discovering that his uncles had been reduced to ashes by the sage's wrath, he implored Kapila for mercy and was told that if the water of the Ganges were sprinkled on their ashes, his uncles would go to heaven. Neither he nor his son could succeed in getting the water. Bhagiratha, the grandson of Amsumat, however, performed severe austerities to propitiate the celestial river Ganga, who consented to come down to earth if someone could resist the force of her descent. Thereupon Bhagiratha took to tapas or penance and succeeded in thus pleasing Siva, who stood up to receive Ganga and humble her pride. She came down with full force intending to crush Siva under her weight, but when she fell on his head, she had to wind through the labyrinth of his locks of hair for a long time without finding an outlet. At the request of Bhagiratha, however, Siva let her flow down to the earth and she followed Bhagiratha to the place where the ashes of his ancestors lay.

This compartment is 13 feet wide and 17 feet 1 inch in height and has a base rising to a height of some 2½ feet above the floor. The principal figures present Siva and his consort Parvati, and measure 16 feet and 12 feet 4 inches in height, respectively. Siva has four arms. His front right hand is held in the abhaya-mudra or the pose of imparting security, while the rear right hand holds a jata or matted hair from which emanates a female figure whose legs alone are now visible. The back left arm is broken at the wrist but it is easy to see that it must have been directed towards the chin of Parvati. The front left hand rested on the head of a pisacha or goblin who seems to stagger under its weight. Siva wears a necklace, open armlets, heavy bracelets and ear-rings. Round his waist passes an ornamented girdle, from under which his garment hangs down and is tied up in a knot on the left thigh. Over his left shoulder hangs the yajnopavita or sacred thread which passes on the right side.

To the left of Siva stands Parvati, wearing a circlet round the brow, from under which the hair is seen falling down in small curls to the temples. She wears ear-rings, necklaces, broad armlets, bracelets, anklets and a girdle with an ornamented clasp. Her left arm hangs down, while the right is bent and held up, but the fore-arm is broken off. Near Parvati's shoulder is Vishnu on his vehicle Garuda with a serpent round his neck, while near Siva's right shoulder sits Brahma on his lotus seat, carried by swans. He is holding a lotus in one of his hands. To the right, near the foot of Siva and facing him, is seated Bhagiratha with flowing matted hair. His arms are now broken but evidently the hands were in the anjali pose folded on his chest in adoration. Between Siva and Parvati is a pisacha or goblin with plaited hair holding a chowry in his left hand and a cobra in the right. To the left of Parvati another similar figure is to be seen. The three-headed female figure above the head of Siva evidently represents the Triveni or the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati. Above Brahma on a level with the head of Siva are six celestials, four males and two females. One of the male figures, which looks important, is holding a large elongated object resembling the banana fruit. Above Parvati there are six similar figures. All these celestials are shown flying in the air in a conventional way. Here it may be observed in passing that celestials with wings, like the peris, were not known to early Hindu mythology.

CELLS OF STORE ROOMS

Next comes a plain building measuring 18 feet in length, 16 feet in width, and 9 feet in height, which might have been a storehouse or residential quarter of the priest in charge of the cave. The sockets would show that the building was provided with doors, now missing. A similar cell is seen on the opposite side also.

MAHESAMURTI-SIVA

Next to the compartment depicting the scene of Ganga's descent is a penal, marked F on the plan, containing the colossal figure of Mahesamurti-Siva, miscalled Trimurti, the most striking sculpture in the cave. It is situated in a recess, carved deep into the interior of the rock. Excluding the thickness of the pilasters in front, which is about 2½ feet, the recess is 10½ feet in depth. The pilasters are 15½ feet apart, but inside them, the recess is 21 feet 6 inches in width. In front of the pilasters stand dvarapalas or door-keepers. The one to the spectator's left is more multilated than the other and is 13½ feet high, the other being 12¾ feet in height. Both are remarkably well carved and are shown in beautiful posture. Their well-executed head-gears are decorated with a crescent on either side. The dvarapala to our right has his left arm placed on the head of an attendant, wearing a wig, a necklace, and a belt. The door-keeper on the other side has an attendant standing in a half-crouching attitude. He has eyes and thick lips, and his tongue is thrust out. In the corners of the opening, both in the floor and in the lintel, are holes, apparently meant for door-posts, and in the floor there is a groove used, probably, for a screen or for a railing to keep off the spectators.

The well-proportioned three-faced bust, occupying this recess, represents Siva in the form of Mahesa or the Supreme Being. It is 17 feet 10 inches high from above the base which measures 2$\frac{3}{4}$ feet in height. The three faces correspond to the three functions of the god, namely, the creation, the protection and the destruction of the universe. Trimurti[1] would be a correct name for this sculpture if the term is taken in the sense of 'triple-form' (tri=three and murti=form or figure) but not in that of the Trinity, or the Hindu triad representing three different gods, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The head-gear is no doubt done in the form of jatamukuta, the characteristic of Siva as well as of Brahma. But as Brahma is represented with four faces, this bust cannot be his. Nor can we identify it with Vishnu, for he wears a kirita and not a jatamukuta. Moreover the principal sculptures in the cave belong to the cult of Siva. The bust, the central figure in the cave, must therefore naturally represent that divinity, i.e., Siva. The three functions before mentioned, it is to be remembered, are attributed to three different gods in Hindu mythology. The creation of the universe is assigned to Brahma, its preservation, to Vishnu, and the destruction, to Siva. To assign them all to one divinity is a Vedantic notion which recognises only one god manifesting himself in different form. The Trimurti, therefore, symbolises the oneness of God. The three heads emanating from one and the same body thus represent three different aspects of one and the same deity who can assume different forms and names in accordance with the functions he is performing.

The front or central face with a calm and dignified appearance represents Siva as the Creator. The lower lip is thick and the breast adorned with several different necklaces.

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[1] As all the panels and carvings in the cave belong to the cult of Siva, it will not be reasonable to suppose as some have done that the recess originally contained an image of Brahma and that the caves were connected with the worship of that god.

The front right hand is badly mutilated, excepting for a bangle on the wrist. The front left hand holds a matulunga or citron. The head is adorned with a richly wrought jatamukuta having a crescent high up on the right side. In front of the hair is a royal tiara consisting of three large jewels, one of which is placed over the forehead, and the other two, over the ears. The central jewel cut in the kirtimukha form is elegantly designed and beautifully executed. The ears of this face are decorated with an ornament called the makarakundala, as it is shaped like a makara or crocodile, here carved in a conventional manner.

The face to our left representing Siva as Rudra, the Destroyer, has a severe look, cruel eyes, a curling moustache and a beard. The head-dress serves as an abode for several snakes seen wriggling through the matted hair. The ornaments include some of the peculiar emblems of Siva, such as the human skull seen over the left temple, and a large cobra with its expanded hood. The right hand, which is raised before the breast, holds a cobra twisted round wrist.

The third face, lying to our right, represents Siva as the Preserver of the universe. The calm and pacific expression befits this aspect of the deity. Of the three principal gods in the later Hindu mythology it is Vishnu who performs this function just as Brahma does that of creation. For a Saiva or devotee of Siva, it is Siva who is supreme and fulfils all these duties and in him all these gods are unified. The ears of this face appear to have been adorned with a sankhapatra or conch-like ornament, now partly broken. The hair escapes in very neatly curled ringlets from uuder the head-dress, which is very elaborately and tastefully ornamented with festoons or pearl pendants. Above the temple is a large leaf, probably that of a lotus, and higher up, at the junction of the head with the central face, a lotus flower with a bud. The left hand has bangles on the wrist similar to those on the two front hands, and holds a lotus.

ARDHANARISVARA-SIVA

We next come to a panel, which is marked G on the plan. Here Siva is represented as Ardhanarisvara or half-male and half-female. The figure is 16 feet 9 inches high, with one of the four hands on the male side leaning on the bull Nandin. The head-dress consists of a high tiara from which two heavy folds fall on the shoulder on the left or female side, a crescent being shown on the right side. On the left, the hair falls across the brow in a series of small and neatly curved ringlets, while on the right, there is a line of knobs along the under-edge of the tiara. The right ear is drawn and has only one ring, while the left has a jewel in the upper part and a large ring in the lobe. The girdle passing round the hips is tied at the left side where the ends are shown hanging down. The male arms wear twisted but open armlet and thick wristlets. The left or female arms have broad armlets and a long solid bracelet with thick jewelled rings at the ends. The back pair of hands of the figure is in a fair state of preservation, the right hand holding a cobra and the left, a mirror. The front left hand, now broken, seems to have held the lower part of the robe which hangs in folds over both the left arms. The front right arm, bent at the elbow, resting on the hump of the bull Nandin, passes on to the left horn on which the hand rests.

Beside Siva and Parvati, some other principal divinities of the Hindu pantheon are also carved on this panel. At the left side near the back arm of the central figure we see the four-armed Vishnu riding his formidable vehicle Garuda, the kind of birds, whose left wing is spread out. The lower left hand of Vishnu is raised and holds a chakra or discus swung round the fore-finger and the other hand seems to have rested on the knee. Both the right hands are broken. Below is a woman holding a chamara or fly-whisk in her right hand. Her head-dress is carved with minute detail and has a crescent on the left side. Her Chignon seems to be decked with flowers. She has large ear-rings and a triple necklace. Two dwarfs are near her. The female to her left is wearing the usual jewellery and carries in her left hand what appears to be the toilet-box of Parvati. Between the Garuda and the central figure is the bust of a female holding a flower in her left hand; above this are two other figures, one of whom seems to be Varuna, riding on a makara or crocodile, his vehicle. Behind Vishnu are a man and women, and under them is a dwarf holding a chamara or fly-whisk.

On the male side of Ardhanarisvara and on a level with Vishnu are Indra and Brahma. The latter is shown sitting on a padmasana or lotus-seat, supported by five hamsas or swans. Three of his faces are visible, the fourth is supposed to be hidden behind the central one. He has four hands. His back right hand holds a lotus but the front right one is broken. The back left hand has a sacrificial ladle, now mutilated, while the other holds a vessel of ghee. He is wearing necklaces and other ornaments, as well as a robe that passes over his left shoulder and breast. To his left we see Indra on Airavata, the celestial elephant, whose, head is well preserved. Indra holds the vajra or thunder-bolt in his left hand, and possibly an ankusa or goad in the right. Between Indra and Brahma is a figure with a chamara in each hand. Below it is to be seen a large figure of Karttikeya, the commander-in-chief of the gods, holding a spear in the right hand and wearing various orgaments and a high cap. Between this figure and the bull Nandin is a woman with a fly-whisk resting on her shoulder; behind her we see a dwarf, and a woman whose head is mutilated. In the upper portion, on each side of the central figure, divine mithunas, and rishis are to be seen. Some of them carry garlands in their hands as offering to the great god Ardhanarisvara in whom the two creative powers of the univrse, the male and the female, are seen unified. Siva the right half, represents the active, and Parvati the left half, the passive principle in Nature.

PARVATI IN THE ATTITUDE OF MANA (A SCENE ON KAILASA)

Further east is a much damaged panel in the south wall of the east, marked H on the plan, which depicts Parvati in a somewhat affectionately angry mood (Sanskrit mana) towards Siva. Both Siva and Parvati are seated together on a raised floor and are adorned with the usual ornaments. Siva has four arms, now broken. His face and the halo are also damaged. He is seated cross-legged with his left leg resting horizontally on the floor, the right leg being slightly raised. The front left hand placed firmly on the seat is still traceable, with its bracelet, beside the left thigh. The front right hand seems to have rested on the right thigh. Parvati is seated to his left wearing a pendant tassel, now almost gone, hanging on her bosom from a thick twisted necklace such as is seen in the panel representing her marriage. Over the left arm and on the right thigh and leg, portions of her garments may still be traced. She appears in a half-sitting posture; her right leg bent at the knee rests horizontally on the floor. The position of her left leg gives an idea of her being ready to get down from the bull Nandin, seated directly below her. Behind her right shoulder stands a female figure with a fly-whisk in her right hand, wearing a crownlike head-gear, ear-rings and necklaces and carrying a child, possibly Skanda, in her lap. On Parvati's left, is another female attendant wearning the usual ornaments, and farther off, a male figure, his right hand near his breast and the left resting on the knot of his robe. Behind the right shoulder of Siva is a female attendant, a fly-whisk in her right hand; and at his feet the skeleton form of the headless image of his faithful attendant Bhringi. Behind him is to be seen a tall figure with a high head-dress, ear-rings, necklace and a long robe covering the left arm down to the wrist. At the foot of this figure, in a recess behind the pilaster, stands a dwarf, who is 3 feet in height and has his arms crossed.

The panel is badly mutilated, in the lower portion, i.e., beneath the platform on which Siva and Parvati are seated, and the figures carved on it cannot be made out with certainty. To the left of the bull Nandin is a fat dwarf wearing a wig. Below him are two animal figures, probably monkeys. How the left side was filled cannot now be determined. The rock over the head of Siva and Parvati is carved into patterns resembling irregular frets on an uneven surface, possibly to represent the rock of Kailasa. At the top of each side are the usual mithunas representing apsaras and gandharvas or celestial musicians. Some of the male figures have curly wigs. An emaciated ascetic to the right holds a basket in his left hand and seems to scatter flowers with the right hand. At little above the head of Siva, towards the left, a section of what seems to be a bell is to be seem. Possibly this also is a symbol for a linga shrine, like the one seen in the panel representing Siva as killing the demon Andhaka.

EAST WING OF THE CAVE

Next, we proceed to the east wing. Descending by a neat flight of steps, each 10 feet 10 inches wide we reach a spacious court measuring 55 feet in width. This court must originally have had to the north side an opening, now filled to a considerable height with earth and stone thrown there when the court was cleared several years ago. In the middle of the court there is a circular platform, 16¼ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in height, which lies directly in front of the Siva shrine in the wing. Apparently it was intended for the figure of Nandin which is now missing. To the south of the courtyard is a rock temple on a panelled basement measuring 3½ feet in height. The basement is supported by a low platform, 2 feet 4 inches high. The three courses of hewn stone now placed on the basement, seem to be of modern origin. The facade is about 50 feet in length. On each side of the steps leading to the temple is a leogryph sitting on its haunches with the forepaw raised. The head of the one on the west side is damaged. Whether these two statues are occupying their original places or were brought from outside cannot be stated definitely.

SIVA SHRINE, MANDAPA AND CHAPELS

A flight or steps leads to a mandapa, marked I on the plan, 58 feet 4 inches long and 24 feet 2 inches wide, which is flanked on each of the east and west sides by chambers, marked J and K on the plan. At the back is a linga shrine which has a pradakshina-patha or circumambulatory passage, varying from 8 feet 4 inches to 8 feet 9 inches in width. Five low steps and a threshold lead into the sanctuary, marked I on the plan, measuring 13 feet 10 inches wide and 16 feet 1 inch deep. Within is enshrined a linga 2 feet 5 inches in diameter, inserted into a vedi or alter measuring 9 feet 5 inches square. This stands in the middle of the floor and is provided with a gargoyle shaped like the mouth of a tiger. The door of the sanctuary is now damaged, but the facade preserves the neat carving, the beautiful frieze running over the pilasters and the crenellated moulding are still unimpaired.

On either side of the passage is a gigantic statue of a dvarapala or warder with attendants. This statue near the east end is now much dilapidated. The one on the opposite side. that is, to the west of the portico, has four arms and a third eye on the fore-head. His headgear is tied in the jatamukuta fashion and his moustaches are very prominent. He has thick lips. His nose is damaged. A twisting snake seems tied in the left ear. The elbow of his front left hand rests on the head of an attendant dwarf. The back hand, raised over the shoulder, seems to hold up his robe. The front right hand is broken off but the back one is extant and holds a snake. Above, on each side of his head, is a fat flying figure, probably of a celestial.

Going in the way of pradakshina of clock wise round the circumambulatory path, a rectangular chapel measuring 10 feet 10 inches by 25 feet is to be seen at the eastern end of the ante-chamber. In front of it are two pillars and two pilasters, each measuring 10 feet 5½ inches in height. These are of the same type as the pillars in the main cave, though their capitals are not fluted. One pillar is broken and the other almost gone. Above there is an entablature of sunk panels, measuring about 11¼ inches square. The mortices in the bases and the tops of the pillars show that there must have been a railing with a door, in the centre of the entrance to the chapel. As the floor of the mandapa is low, steps are provided to give easy access to the chapel.

The chapel contains several sculptures of good workmanship now soiled by smoke and damaged by rough handling. On the south side is a large figure of Ganesa with the rat, his vehicle carved near the left knee. To his right is a squatting figure whose head seems to rest on the knee. There is also another figure holding a cobra. Above the head of Ganesa a flying couple or mithuna is seen on each side.

At the northern end of the chapel is a standing figure, probably of Siva, holding a trisula of trident, his left hand resting on the defaced figure of a gana or attendant. Brahma is sitting on the right on a lotus, supported by swans. Behind him is a monkey-faced dwarf and above, three figures, two of whom, a male and a female, hold offerings in their hands. On the left of Siva is Vishnu, mounted on his vehicle Garuda and holding his mace in one of his right hands. He holds his chakra or discus in one of his left hands and the sankha or conch in the other. A male figure, below, holds the stalk of a lotus in the left hand. Between this figure and that of Siva is a female holding a fly-whisk in her hand.

MATRIKA PANEL

The western wall, facing the entrance, has some ten figures carved on it. Of these, the one at the north end represents Ganesa. Next to it is a much defaced male figure, probably of Virabhadra. The remaining eight are famale figures, all badly mutilated. They represent the Matrikas or Divine Mothers who are the saktis (energies or wives of the several gods in the Hindu pantheon. Their names are (1) Brahmi, the sakti of Brahma, (2) Mahesvari, the sakti of Mahesvara or Siva (3) Vaishnavi, the sakti of Vishnu, (4) Kaumari, the sakti of Kumara, (5) Aindri, the sakti of Indira, (6) Varahi, sakti of Varaha. (7) Narasimhi, the sakti of Narasimha, and (8) Chamunda, a terrific form of Durga. All have aureoles round their heads. Some carry children, others have them by their sides. Each has beside her a pole or staff surmounted by her ensign, such as a swan, a peacock, etc. The swan is the emblem and vehicle of Brahmi or Brahmani, the peacock of Kaumari and so on. Their vahanas or vehicles are the same as those of the deities from whom they originated. These Matrikas, according to the Markandeya-Purana, were the sakti or energies of the principal divinities, who came to attend on Durga when she was about to kill the demon Raktabija in the fight against the demons Sumbha and Nisumbha.

Over these sculptures an architrave is to be seen which is 2 feet 10 inches deep. It consists of three plain parts of which the upper is divided into six and the lower into five spaces by various designs of ornaments such as are found in the caves at Ajanta or Karle, though they differ from them in having a fantastic face which is technically termed kirtimukha (i.e. the face of fame). There is a sunken frieze between these parts, eight inches broad, which still retains the mineral colours with which it was originally painted.

EASTERN CHAPEL

The chapel on the opposite side is plain, its floor being sunk a few inches below the level of the plinth. It measures 27 feet 7 inches by 11 feet 7 inches and has two pillars in front. Water, oozing through the rock above, collects and mostly remains inside the chapel during the dry season. Tradition says that on the night of the Mahasivaratri, the water of the Ganges comes through the roof of this chapel. On that occasion the people of the Island and those from surrounding places flock to it to enjoy the benefit of this miracle and to attend the fair then held.

RAVANA UNDER KAILASA

Returning to the Main Cave, and proceeding towards the north of the eastern aisle we have a compartment (marked M on the plan), depicting Ravana attempting to uproot Kailasa, the sacred residence of Siva. The legend connected with this sculpture is thus given in the Puranas.

Ravana conquered Kubera, the god of wealth and wrested from him his vimana or celestial car called Pushpaka. While he was flying on it near Kailasa, it suddenly stopped and could proceed no further. Not understanding what was the matter Ravana looked down and saw a dark coloured dwarf named Nandisvara, who told him that he could not continue his journey that way as Siva was sporting there and had made it inacessible to everyone. On hearing this Ravana was very much annoyed, and laughing contemptuously at his ugly appearance and his monkey face enquired of Nandisvara as to who that Siva was. Incensed at this insult Nandisvara cursed Ravana, declaring that he and his race would be destroyed by the very monkeys towards whom he had shown so much contempt. Ravana retorted by saying that he would uproot the mountain and throw it out of his path. Then, putting his arms underneath, he lifted it off the earth. Parvati, terrified at the sudden unheaval, clung to Siva, who pressed the mountain down with the toe of his left foot, crushing the arms of Ravana. Thereupon the latter wept bitterly and gave a tremendous roar that shook the whole world His grandfather, Pulastya, came and exhorted him to praise Siva. Ravana, whose pride was humbled, followed his advice and praised the deity who has moved by his prayers and released him.

Reverting to the study of the sculptures, we see Siva and Parvati seated together on the Kailasa mountain. Siva's third eye is clearly marked as are also his large ear-rings. The figure seems to have had eight arms, now more or less broken. Two of them rest on the hands of attendants, as if the god were trying to steady himself at the sudden shaking of the mountain. One of the right hands holds the trisula or trident, of which the head is still intact. Parvati is sitting on the right side but her figure is badly multilated. On each side of the compartment is a large figure somewhat resembling the doorkeeper round the linga shrine in the cave, but with a protuberance above the brows. The figure on the west side with a prominently carved forehead is marked by snakes emanating from behind his left shoulder. To the left of Siva are several figures, all more or less defaced. In front, near his foot, is Bhringi, easily distinguished by his skeleton form. To the left of Bhringi, in front of the large figure behind the pilaster, is Ganesa. Below this group is the ten-headed demon Ravana, a sword stuck in his waist-band and his back turned towards the spectator. His ten heads are obliterated, and only a few of his twenty arms are traceable. Numberous figures are to be seen above Siva; to his left is Vishnu riding his vehicle Garuda, and at iger, the vehicle of Parvati, crouches in the recess close by.

SIVA AS LAKULISA

The next panel (marked N on the plan) is the last of the series of the principal sculptures in the Main Cave, and occupies the recess at the eastern end of the main entrance to the north. Here Siva sits cross-legged on a padmasana or lotus set. The stalk of the lotus forming the seat is held by two Naga figures visible to their waists. The head-gear of Siva is elaborate and his head is surrounded by the usual nimbus. The face, now much damaged, bears a placid contemplative expression. The arms are broken at the shoulders and it is difficult to say anything definite about them. It is to be regretted that a somewhat similar figure in the northern wall of the mandapa in the western wing of the cave is also similarly damaged, otherwise the identification of the sculpture would have been certain. Comparison, however with a similar sculpture in the Dumar Lena at Ellora would show that there must have been a club in one of the diety's hands, possibly the left. If this assumption is correct, we may recognise in this figure a representation of Lakulisa, who, according to the Puranas, was the last (28th) incarnation of Siva. Flying above the central figure are group of celestials. At the right upper corner of the sculpture is the figure of Brahma seated on his vehicle, the swan, with Indra on the elephant Airavata shown below him. The lower portion of the sculpture is occupied by serveral figures, one of which seems to represent Surya or the Sun-god holding a lotus in each of the two hands. To the left of Siva is a plantain tree with three leaves expanded and the central germ rolled up. Under his left knee is what appears to be a sun-flower. On each side of the central figure we see a female with a fly-whisk. At the back of each of these attendants another female is seen, but so defaced that only the outlines can be distinguished. Below, on both sides of the plantain tree are multilated figures. Over the plantain tree Vishnu rides Garuda with curly hair: the faces of both are obliterated. Above Vishnu is a figure riding a horse whose head and forelegs are broken, and behind is a rishi or ascetic with a rosary in his hand.

PAINTINGS

The ceiling of this compartment still preserves traces of the original painting. From the accounts of the Portuguese writers it would appear that the interior of the adjuncts was originally painted in different colours to enhance its beauty. De Couto, who noticed the caves in 1603, says that the whole interior, 'the pillars, the figures and everything else had formerly been covered with a coat of lime mixed with bitumen and other compositions that made it very bright and beautiful'. This colouring made the figures not only beautiful 'but their features and workmanship could be very distinctly perceived so that neither in silver nor in wax, could such figures be engraved with greater nicety, fineness or perfection.' Grose (1750) was very much attracted by the beauty and freshness of the colouring of some of the paintings round the cornices. Erskine (1813) mentions several concentric circles with figures in the roof of the main entrance. In 1835 the remains of some paintings were still observable, which seemed to have originally been red, but had in some places faded to a purple blue. As has been noted, patches of this coloured coating are still preserved on the ceiling in the west portico and also in the Matrika chapel in the east wing. How these cave temples looked in ancient days when they were bright with such decorations only those can realise who know the grandeur of the Ajanta paintings.

CHAPTER VI

SMALLER CAVES

Having visited the principal cave, we now come to the lesser caves of the Island, including those on the eastern hill. They are six in number. Four of them lie on the western and two on the eastern hill.

CAVES II-V.

A short walk of about one furlong from the Main Cave towards the east brings us to Cave II, which does not appear to have ever been completed. It has a portico supported by four square pillars, and two unfinished cells. Sometime ago it was cleared along with both of its water-cisterns.

Cave III on the same level as the Main Cave and facing E.N.E. is a short distance away. Its extreme length is about 109½ feet, inclusive of the chapel at the north end. The entrance is blocked by debris, which has been partly cleared, and the interior is much damaged by the water which collects inside the cave. The front was supported by six pillars and two pilasters with decorated shafts and capitals resting on square bases. These pillars have now fallen, but the pilasters on the right side with a part of the cornice remains. The mandapa or portico is internally 79 feet in length and 32 feet in breadth. The floor of the chapel at the north end of this mandapa is raised to a height of 4 feet above the portico. Four octagonal columns and two pilasters originally supported the roof. The chapel is plain on the inside and measures roughly 39 feet by 22 feet.

A small chamber measuring 15 feet 9 inches by 16 feet 5 inches is near the chapel. Usually water lies in it to a depth of several inches even in the dry season. The walls of the next chamber, which formed the sanctuary, are of different dimensions. The one at the back measures 22 feet and that in the front, 20 feet 9 inches. The southern and the northern walls are respectively about 21 feet and 22 feet 4 inches in length. Three feet from the wall, opposite the entrance, stands a low vedi or altar, 7 feet 4 inches square. On either side of the entrance to the shrine is a dvarapala or door-keeper crudely carved but with a fine leogryph above, and over it, a divine mithuna flying in the air. Though these figures are badly mutilated owing to the action of water yet the frieze and the jambs still preserve their original carving. In the centre of the lintel is a male figure with six arms, seated on a raised platform. To his left is another male figure, and a crocodile is on each side of this group. The third chamber at the southern end is plain and of the same measurements as the one at the northern end.

Still farther to the south of Main Cave, is Cave IV which faces east and is even more dilapidatad than the preceding one. The mandapa or portico is about 49 feet 6 inches long. At each end of the portico is a chapel originally supported in front by two pillars and two pilasters. The one at the north end is 23 feet 9 inches by 17 feet 4 inches and has a cell at the back which measures 14 feet by 16 feet 4 inches approximately. The cell on the west side measures 13 feet 6 inches in front and 14 feet 9 inches at the back, the depth being about 15½ feet. The chapel at the south end measures 21 feet 6 inches by 17 feet 4 inches and has a cell at the back which is 16 feet 7 inches long by 15 feet 10 inches deep. A shrine with two side chambers lies behind the portico. The door of the shrine is 4 feet 9 inches wide and has on each side of it large dvarapalas or warders leaning on dwarfs with two flying figures over their heads. The sanctum measures 19 feet 10 inches by 18 feet 10 inches, internally and has a low pitha or altar, 6 feet 11 inches square, containing a linga measuring 23 inches in diameter. Each of the two side chambers measures 15 feet square and has doors with projecting pilasters and ornamental pediments. The horse-shoe ornament repeated several times in the carving of the doors is the principal decorative feature.

A little lower down the hill is Cave V, only partially cleared. The entrance is almost blocked with debris and the plain square cut pillars are the only objects to be noticed inside.

CAVES VI-VII.

Retracing our steps to cross the ravine and ascending the opposite hill to a height of about a hundred feet above the level of the Main Cave, we reach the sixth Cave. It has a portico facing W.N.W. and measuring 73 feet 6 inches long and 27 feet 4 inches wide at north end and 25 feet 7 inches at the south. There are three chambers at the back and a piece of level ground in front. The portico has four pillars and two pilasters which measure 8 feet 5 inches in height and are about 2 feet square at the base. Two of them are broken. The two side cells are plain but have neatly carved doors which measure 2 feet 11 inches wide and 6 feet 5 inches high. They are approached by two steps, 8 inches high, and a threshold of 4 inches. The architrave resting on the jambs is about 5 inches wide, with a simple moulding, and then comes a band 6⅞ inches broad, with a neatly wrought crenellated ornament. The northern cell measures roughly 12 feet 7 inches square and the southern, about 14½ feet by 15 feet.

The central chambers of the cave forms the shrine and has a door 7 feet 11 inches high and about 4 feet wide, having well cut pilasters and a frieze. It has two steps, one of which is semi-circular and has a multilated head of a lion on each side. The other step, measuring 7½ feet, has a low threshold in front. The shrine is almost square, each side measuring nearly 15 feet 7 inches internally. To the back wall is attached an altar, 4 feet 5 inches long, 3 feet 5 inches wide and 3 feet 4 inches high. It is neatly moulded and stands on a low platform, 7 feet 2½ inches by 8 feet 10½ inches. There is a gargoyle or water-spout to the north of it. Its top is hollow, the cavity being 17 inches long and 6 inches wide, but no linga or any other image is fixed in it.

The cave, as has already been noted, was used as a Christian church when it was in the possession of the Portuguese.

About 150 yards north of this cave is a small excavation with three partitions or cells. Apparently it was not completed and there is nothing remarkable about it.

OTHER ANTIQUITIES

Farther on towards the north-east and under the summit of the hill, are three wells cut in the rock, with openings which measure about 2½ feet square. Near these wells are some brick foundations, and on the summit of the hill above are the remains of some structure, the nature of which is still to be determined. Possibly they belonged to some Buddhist buildings.

APPENDIX

In the foregoing pages all the principal sculptures or scenes carved in the caves of the Elephanta have been described. Some iconographical notes about the divinities represented in the excavations are here appended with a view to facilitate further study. That the sculptures of these caves are connected with the Hindu pantheon of the 'epics' and not of the Vedas need not be emphasised. The Hindus since the Vedic age recognise three main gods, namely, Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer. Other gods, including Indra who is called Devaraja or king of the gods, and Surya are subordinate to them. Even in this triad Vishnu is considered to be the chief. According to the Padma Purana, Brahma, as a result of the curse pronounced on him by his wife, Savitri, because of his ignoring her at the time of the sacrificial initiation or diksha and of his putting Gayatri in her place, has no following, so much so that temples exclusively dedicated to his worship are extremely rare, though his image is often seen in the temples of other gods. It would appear that 'the two deities Vishnu and Siva gradually absorbed the special attributes of Brahma, who as the chief divinity of a sect ceased to claim many votaries for two reasons: first because, as a symbol of prayer, he was held to be present in all worship: secondly because, as a symbol of creation, his special work in the cosmos was finished and he could no longer be moved by prayer'. This view would resolve Hinduism into two main sects, namely, Viashnavism and Saivism, the former recognising Vaishnu and the latter, Siva as the chief God. The Sauras or the devotees of Surya, the Sun-god, are included amongst the former, and the Saktas or the worshippers of Sakti, in the latter Sakti or Divine Energy is unified in Parvati or Durga, the consort of Siva. Durga has various aspects or forms in which she is worshiped by the Saktas. Mahishasuramarddini or the vanquisher of the Mahisha or Buffalo-demon is one of her principal forms and is depicted in some of the sculptures in the Main Cave. All the Brahmanical gods are supposed to have their respective Saktis named after them, but Parvati or. Durga is the chief and represents all the Saktis, who are considered to be her vibhutis or manifestations of power. Parvati is the left half of Siva and her worship goes hand in hand with that of Siva.

The true worshipper of a divinity has to look upon the Ishta-devata as supreme and as the only fulfiller of prayers. Thus each deity becomes supreme and may be regarded as a symbol or manifestation of all the powers of the One Supreme God. It is because of such ideas that the term Henotheism or Kathenotheism is sometimes applied to the religious belief of the Hindus. The Vedantic conception embodied in the maxim ekam-ev-advitiyam Brahma, meaning 'there is only one unrivalled God' is a development of such ideas.

Only the chief characteristics of the main divinities connected with the sculptures in the caves of Elephanta are mentioned below. For fuller details some work on Hindu mythology should be consulted. The names of these gods are given here in alphabetical order.

Agni is the god of fire. He rides a ram, has two faces, three legs and seven arms, holding various weapons. Svaha and Svadha are the names of his wives and are also used as exclamations for making oblations to gods and manes respectively.

Asura in the Puranas is a general name for the enemies of the gods.

Brahma has four heads and as many arms. He may be represented as standing, or as seated on a hamsa (swan) or a lotus. On his chest he has a yajnopavita or sacred thread. His hands may carry the following emblems: (1) akshamala or rosary, (2) kurcha, i.e., a handful of kusa grass, (3) kamandalu or gourd, (4) srucha, i.e., a large wooden ladle, (5) sruva, i.e., a sacrificiai ladle and (6) the ajyasthali, i. e., a vessel for holding clarified butter. Two of his hands may be shown in the abhaya (security-imparting) and the varada (boon-giving) postures. He may be represented as seated in a chariot drawn by seven swans. At times the four Vedas and the ajyasthali are shown in the front, and rishis around him. Sometimes he is represented with only two arms instead of four, the right arm being bent with the palm turned upwards.

Daksha, the son of Brahma, is one of the progenitors of the human race. He had twenty-four fair daughters, personifications of domestic virtues. Of them Sati, personification of truth, selected the uncouth ascetic Siva for her husband and thus incurred the displeasure of Daksha. The latter once celebrated a great sacrifice, but invited neither Siva, his son-in-law, nor Sati, his own daughter. Sati, however, went to the sacrifice of her own accord, and was much insulted. She thereupon threw herself into the fire and perished. Siva hearing this was angry and, going to the sacrifice, completely destroyed it. He pursued Daksha and decapitated him, but afterwards restored him to life. Thenceforward Daksha acknowledged his supremacy. According to another account, Siva, on hearing of the incident, pulled off a hair from his head in great anger and dashed it against the ground. A powerful demon arose who, being ordered by Siva, went to the sacrifice and completely destroyed it cutting off thehead of Daksha at the same time. This demon is consequently regarded as an incarnation of Siva and is known by the name of Virabhadra.

Durga — See below under Parvati.

Ganesa the god of success and wisdom, is the eider son of Siva and Parvati. He has the head of an elephant, and a mouse for his vehicle. He may be shown standing or seated, with two, four or more hands, holding an *anuksa* (goad), a vessel, sweets and other attributes.

Garuda, the son of Kasyapa by his wife Vinata, is the king of birds, and the implacable enemy of serpents. He is the vahana or vehicle of vishnu.

Indra is the king of gods; holds the vajra or thunder bolt, in his hand and rides an elephant called Airavata.

Aindri or Indrani is Indra's wife or sakti whose emblems are similar to those of her husband..

Kumara or Karttikeya, the second son of Siva, is the god of war and the commander-in-chief of the gods. Usually he is represented with six faces, his cognizance being the peacock and the long sakti or spear in his hand. He is one of the chief agents of Siva's destructive power and his vahana or vehicle, the peacock, is an appropriate emblem for the pride and pomp of war.

Matrikas or Divine Mothers, seven or eight in number, are the representations of the energies of the principal gods of the Hindu pantheon. They are Brahmi, Mahesvari, Aindri or Indrani, Varani, Vaishnavi, Kaumari, Chamunda and Narasimhi. Sometimes Narasimhi is left out and Charchika is put in her stead. By means of their respective vehicles or cognizances they can be easily identified. According to the Markandeya-Purana (Deva-Mahatmyam, X, 48), they are only the different forms or aspects of Durga. Sometimes only seven of these goddesses are shown, Charchika and Narasimhi being left out.

Siva is one of the three principal gods. He is especially the destroyer. In the Vedas, he is known as Rudra, the 'Terrible', but in the epics he is usually called Siva, 'the Auspicious one'. His preferential worship developed in the epic period. He controls creation and the linga or phallus is his symbol. One of his forms is Ardhanarisvara, half male and half female, symbolising the unity of the generative principles. He has three eyes, one of which is in the forehead. They represent his view of the three divisions of time, the past, the present and the future. while the crescent, above the central eye, marks the measure of time by months; a serpent round his neck, the measure of years; and the necklace of skulls and serpents about his person, the perpetual revolution of ages as well as the successive extinction and generation of the races of mankind. His thickly matted hair is coiled about his forehead. On his head he bears the Ganges, and is consequently called Gangadhara. His dark blue throat is due to the deadly poison he swallowed to save the world when the gods churned the ocean to obtain *amrita* or the nectar of immortality. He wears the skin of an elephant and holds in his hand a trisula or trident, his principal weapon. He carries a kind of drum called damaru, holds a deer in one of his hands, and rides a bull called Nandin generally shown in front of his shrine or image. He married twice. His first wife Sati committed suicide on being insulted by her father Daksha. She was reborn as Parvati the daughter of Himalaya, the king of mountains, and through severe penance re-obtained Siva for her husband. In this form she is known by several names such as Durga, Kali, Uma, Gauri, Bhavani, etc., and is the chief object of worship with the Saktas, who adore Sakti or Divine Energy as the Supreme Being.

Siva is also worshipped as a great ascetic and is said to have reduced

Kama, the god of love, to ashes by a glance from his central eye, because Kama attempted to create in him passion for Parvati whilst he was engaged in meditation. As the destroyer of the universe he is said to have burnt the whole world, as well as the gods, including Brahma and Vishnu, and rubbed the ashes thus produced upon his body. The use of ashes by his worshippers is connected with this myth. The legend that Siva, on his way to destroy the demon Tripura, let fall tears of rage which grew into berries called rudrakṣha (= the eye of Rudra) gave rise to the use of rosaries of these beads by the worshippers of Siva. Kailasa, one of the loftiest northern peaks of the Himalayas, is considered to be the favourite abode or heaven of Siva.

Surya is the sun god usually represented as holding lotus flowers in his hands and sitting in a chariot drawn by seven horses. Aruna the younger brother of Garuda is his charioteer.

Trimurti — It is the symbolical representation of the unification of the three principal gods of the Hindu pantheon, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, who, according to the monotheistic conception, are the hypostases of one and the same Supreme Soul (Paramatman).

Varuna in later mythology is the god of the ocean and of the western quarter. He is represented with a noose in his hand and as riding a crocodile.

Virabhadra is the powerful attendant of Siva. See under Daksha.

Vishnu, the principal god in the Hindu Trinity, is differently represented in different places. He is usually shown seated on his vehicle Garuda. He has on his breast a peculiar mark called Srivatsa and holds in his four hands, the chakra or discus called Sudarsana, the gada or mace named Kaumodaki, a padma or lotus, and the sankha or conch named Panchajanya.

Yama is the god of death who holds a stout staff or danda in his hand and rides a buffalo.

GLOSSARY

Apsaras—A celestial nymph.

Architrave—The beam or lowest division of the entablature, which rests immediately on the column.

Cornice—Moulded projection crowning the part to which it is fixed.

Entablature—The portion of the structure supported by the columns and consisting of the architrave, frieze and cornice.

Frieze—The part of the entablature lying between the architrave and cornice and enriched with figures or other ornaments.

Ganas—Attendants of Siva,

Gandharvas—Celestial musicians.

Hinayana—See under Mahayana.

Jatamukuta—Head-gear formed by the twists of matted hair into a tall cap.

Kiritamukuta—A conical cap sometimes ending in an ornamented top carrying a central pointed knob. Covered with jewelled bands round the top as well as the bottom, it is worn exclusively by Vishnu.

Kirtimukha—Literally means the face of fame but is used to signify a conventional sculptural design which is characterised by a grinning face.

Mahabharata—The great Sanskrit epic of India, the theme of which is the war between the sons of Dhritarashtra and the sons of Pandu. It consists of eighteen books and is commonly attributed to the sage Vyasa.

Mahasivaratri—A great festival of the worshippers of Siva which falls on the 14th day of the dark fortnight of the month of Magha, i.e., January-February.

Mahayana(=Great Vehicle) is a later phase of Buddhism, the earlier or the original form being known as Hinayana (=Little or Humble Vehicle). These names originated with the Neo-Buddhists who extolled their own church as maha or Great and called the other one hina, Humble or Little. The original doctrine required monastic discipline which did not appeal to the laity. Mahayana became more popular, for it was more akin to Brahmanism. Mahayanism "is a pantheistic doctrine with a theistic tinge in which the Buddha takes the place of the personified Brahman of the Vedanta". It recognises Buddhas and the cult of Bodhisattvas (Beings destined to become Buddhas) and allows pompous ceremonies and the worship of images which do not appeal to a Hinayanist, who holds that Buddha has attained Nirvana and cannot beworshipped consequently. It is owing to this belief that we do not find images of Buddha in the early sculpture. The Mahayanist would worship the 'Primordial' Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, his attendants, in the representations. With the growth of this doctrine the margin of difference between the Hindus and the

Buddhists gradually faded almost entirely away. This infusion led to another type of theology, viz., the Tantric form of worship in which God is worshipped with his Sakti and which was the chief cause of the decline of Buddhism in India. Both these phases, i.e., Mahayana and Hinayana spread in India and abroad. In Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Cambodia it is the Hinayana form that is professed. In Korea, China and Japan both exist, the Mahayana predominating, while the Buddhism of Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia is the Mahayana with a considerable infusion of Tantric ideals.

Mudra—Pose of hand.

Naga—A semi-divine being having the head of a man and the tail of a serpent, inhabiting patala or the nether regions.

Padmasana—A lotus seat or a kind of sitting posture in which the legs are crossed and the hands are placed in the lap with the palms turned upwards,

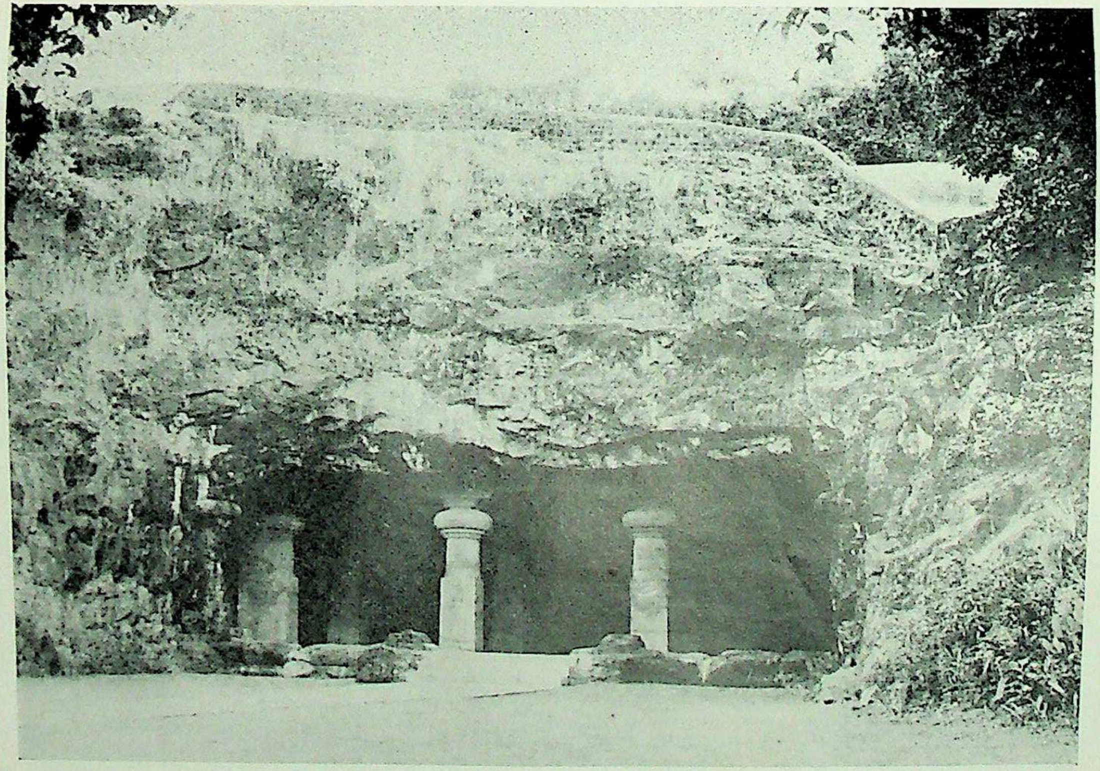
Pradakshina—A ceremonial act performed by walking round a sacred edifice, object or person from left to right or clockwise.

Puranas—18 sacred works or epics supposed to have been composed by Vyasa. Their names are: (1) Agni, (2) Bhagavata, (3) Bhavishyat, (4) Brahma, (5) Brahmanda, (6) Brahmavaivartta, (7) Garuda, (8) Kurma, (9) Linga, (10) Markandeya (11) Matsya, (12) Narada (13) Padma, (14) Siva, (15) Skanda, (16) Vamana, (17) Varaha and (18) Vishnu-Purana.

Stupa—Primarily a funeral mound or tumulus, but with the Buddhists a structure erected either to enshrine some relic of the Buddha or of a Buddhist saint or to commemorate some very sacred spot.

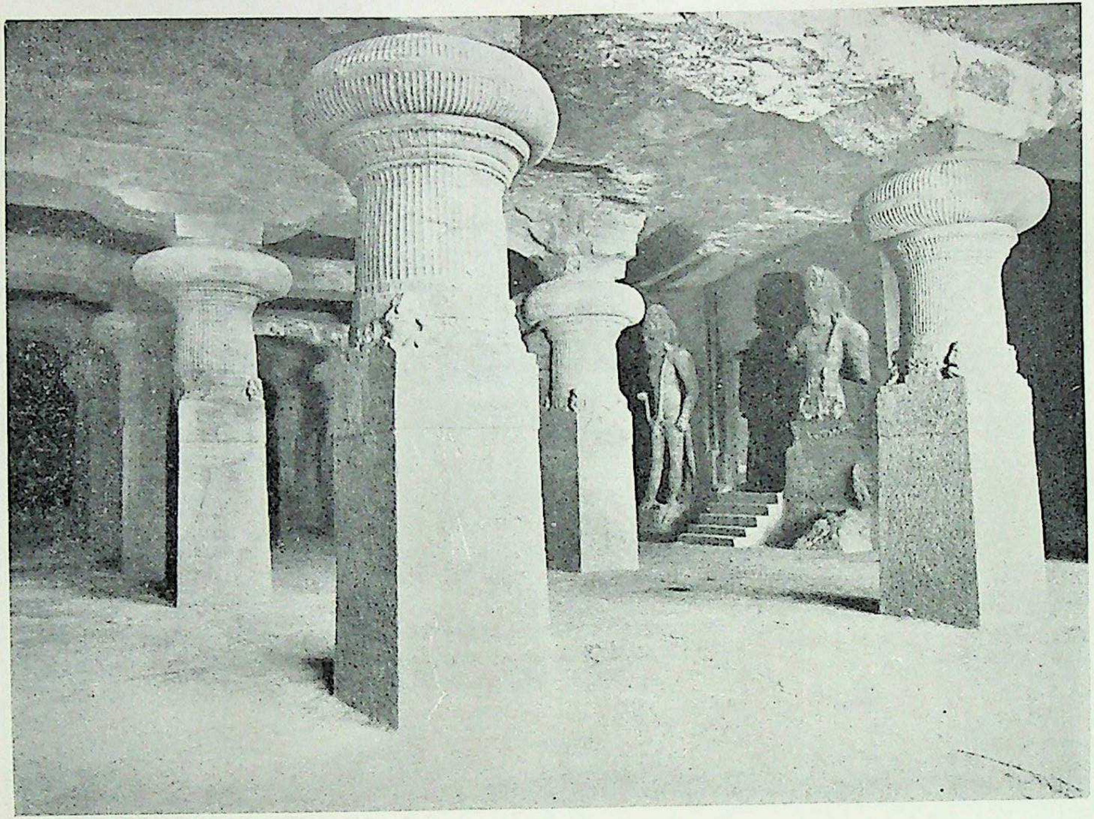
Sukhavati—The heaven of the eternal Buddha Amitabha of the Mahayanists.

Tandava—The cosmic dance of Siva, symbolising the perfect joy siva feels in the creation, which he makes, controls, destroys and renews at will. It is so-called after Tandu, the devoted worshipper of Siva.



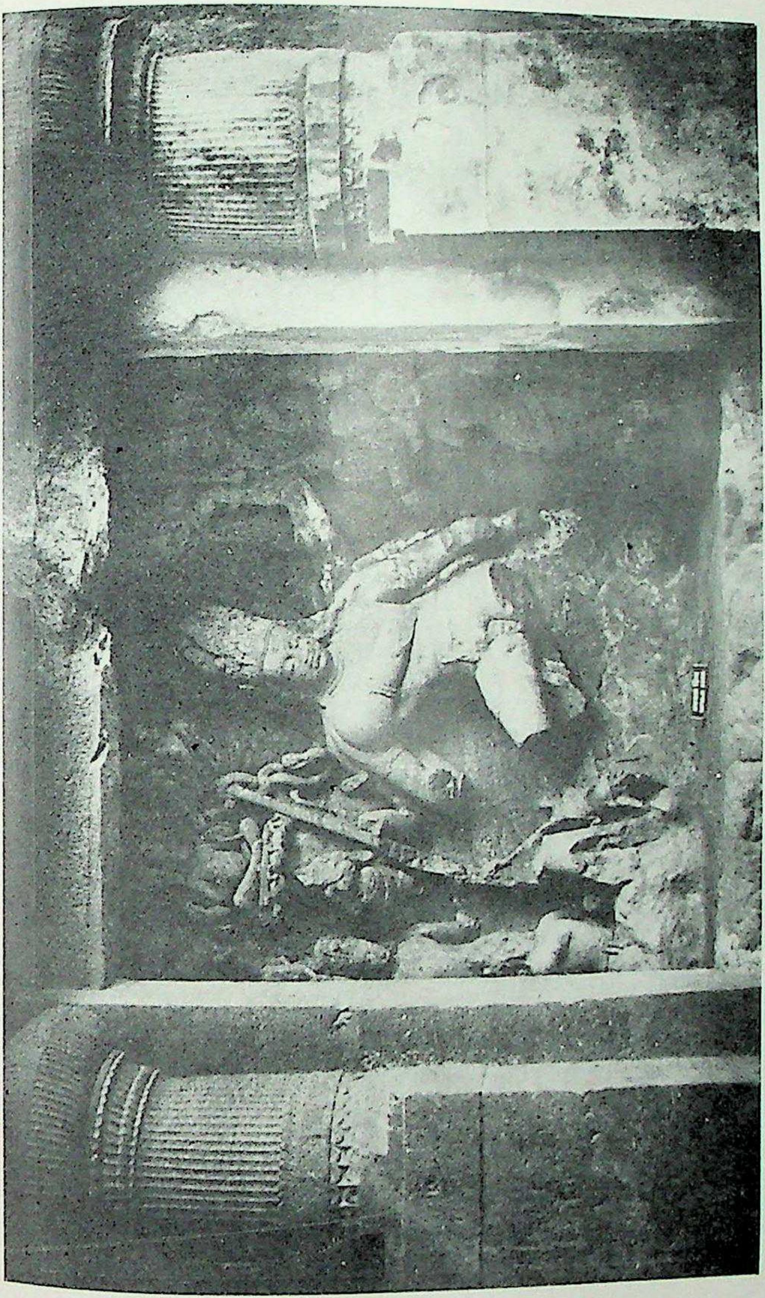
Main Cave—Cave One—View from North

1



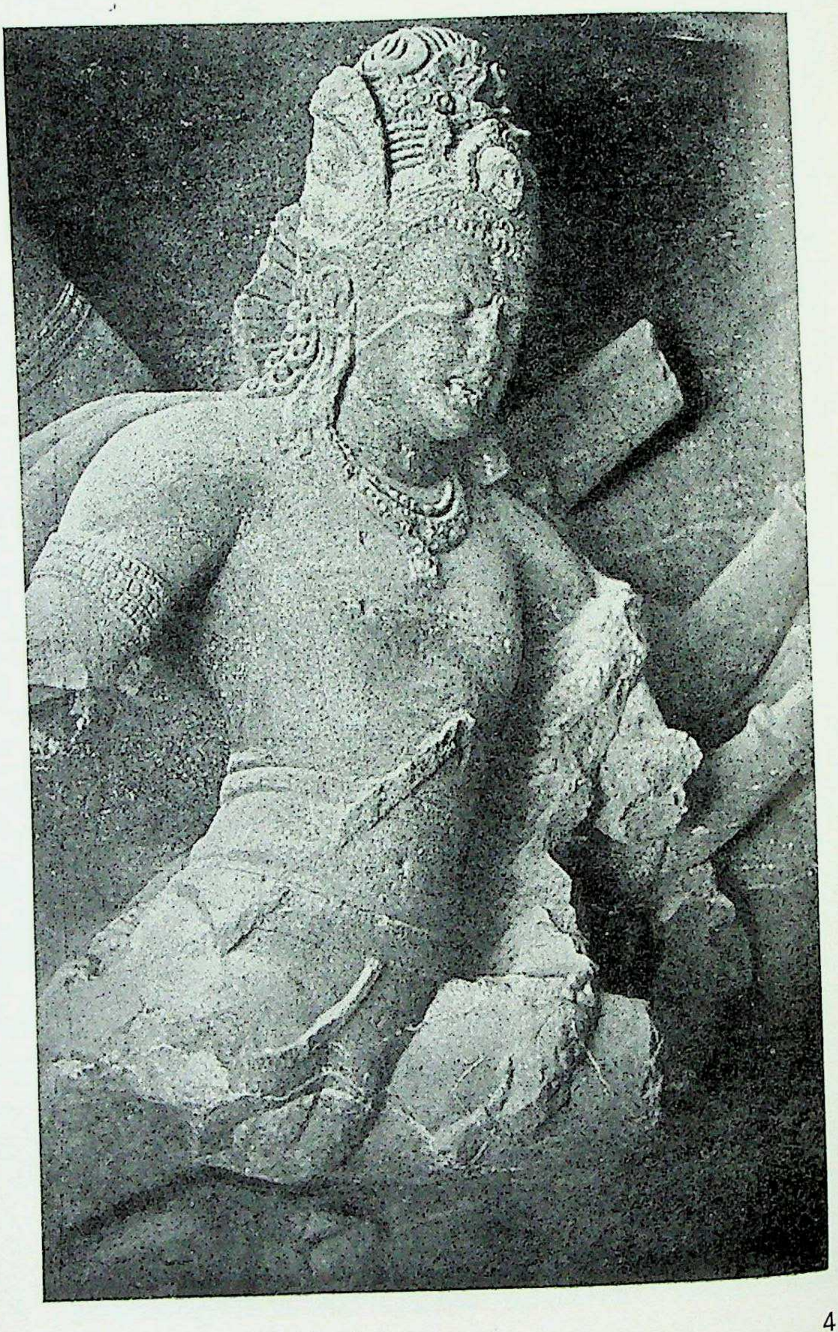
2

Cave One – Interior

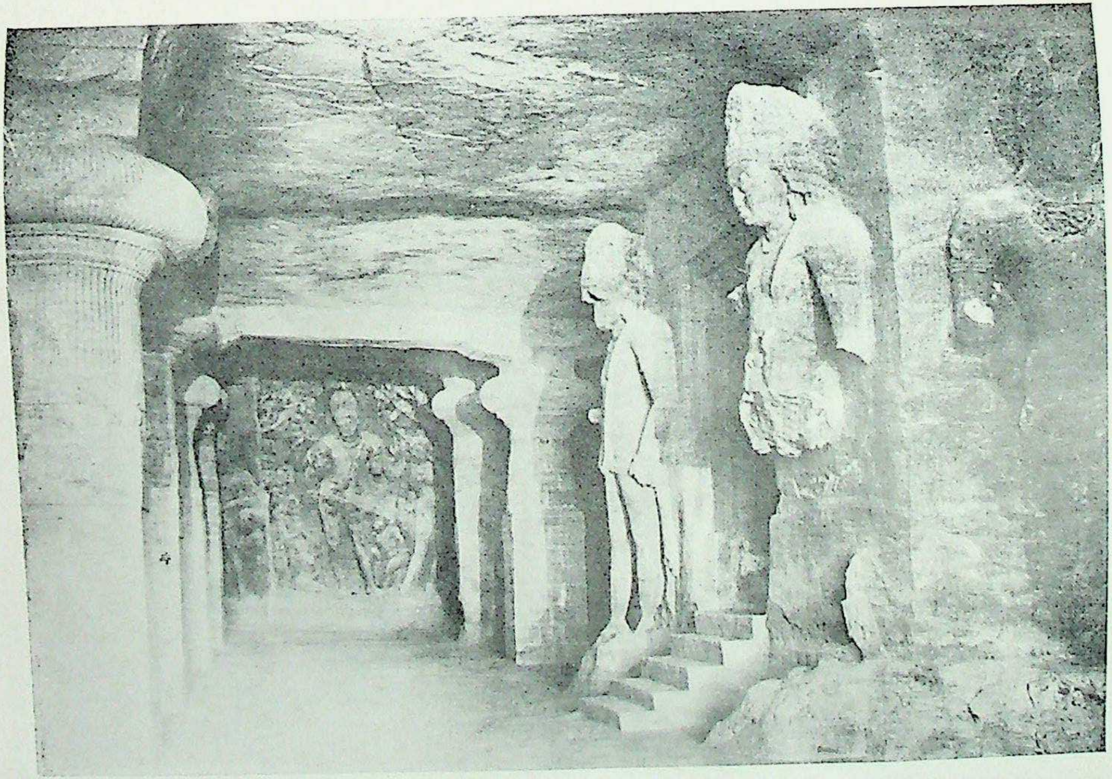


3

Nataraja

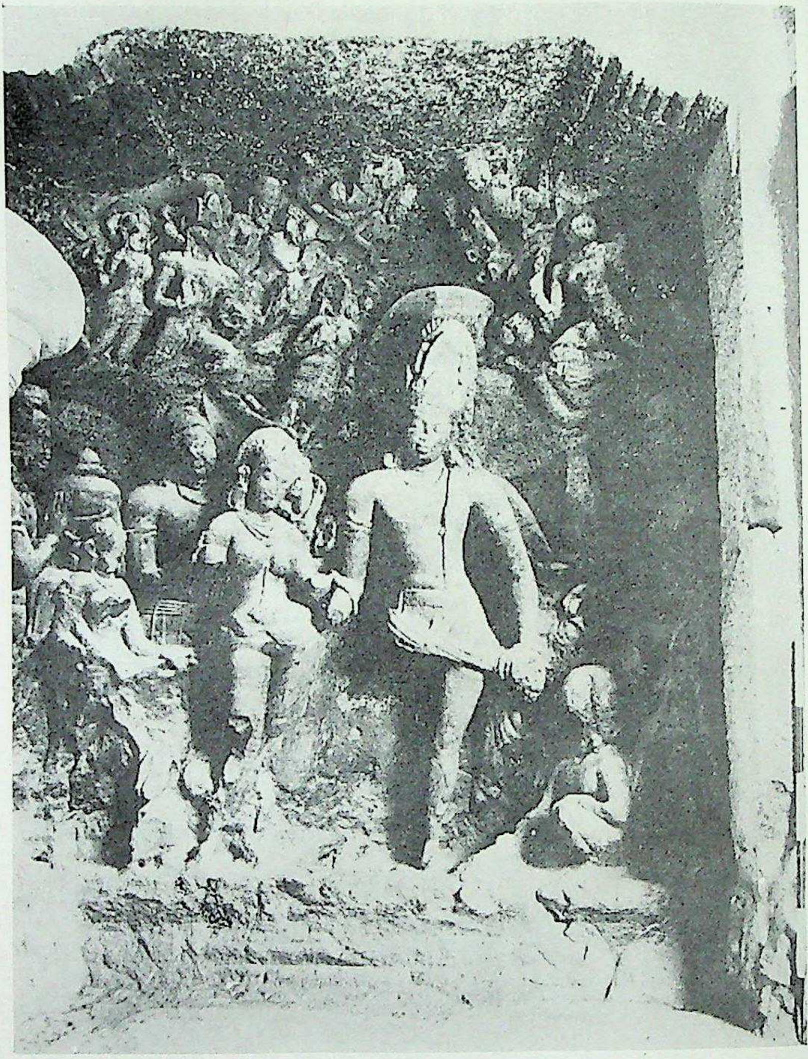


Andhakasuravadha Murti

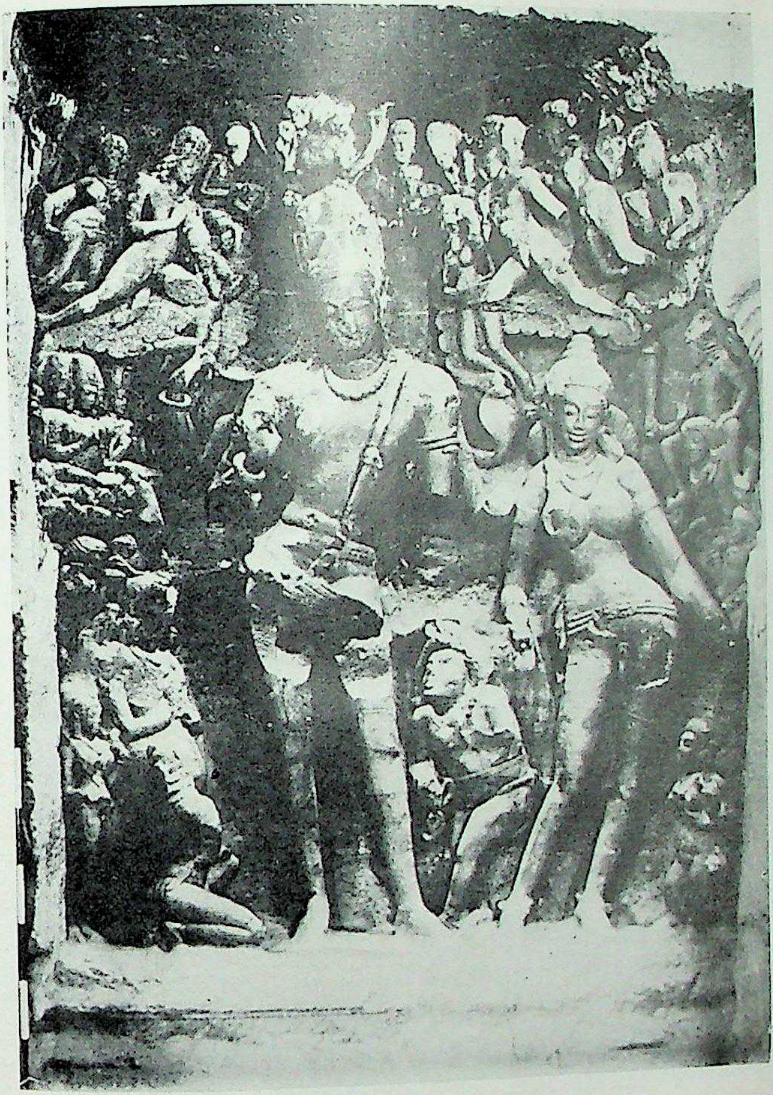


5

Siva Shrine with Dvarapalas

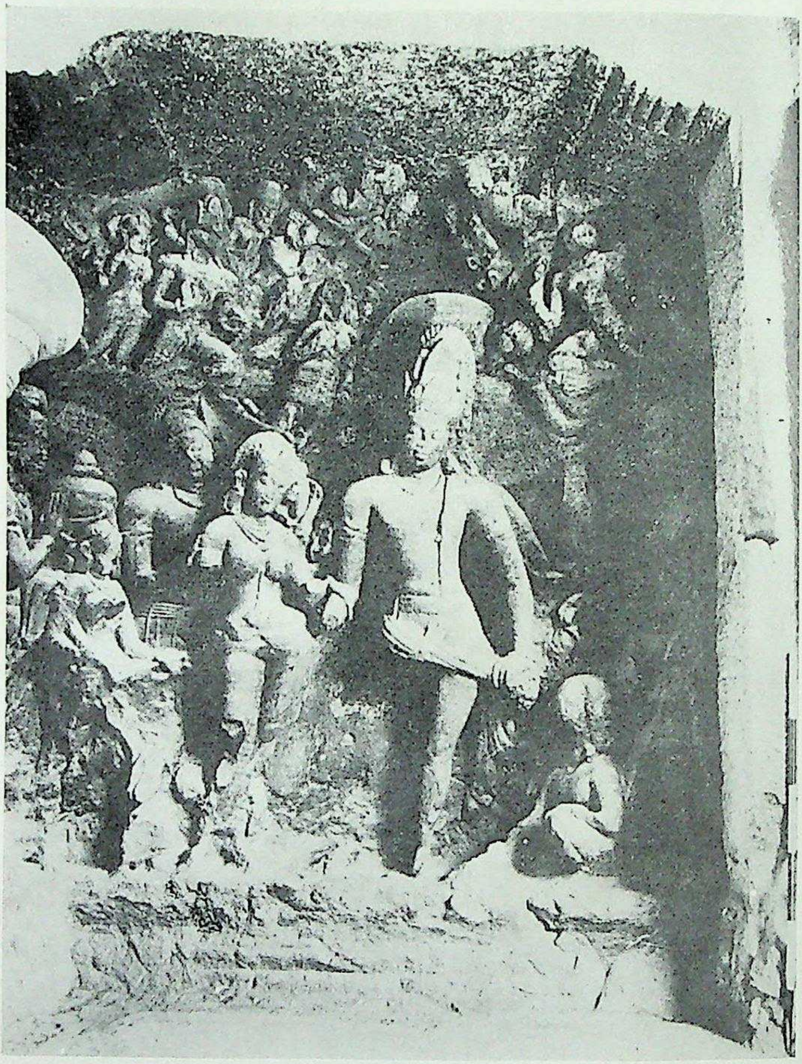


Kalyanasundaramurti

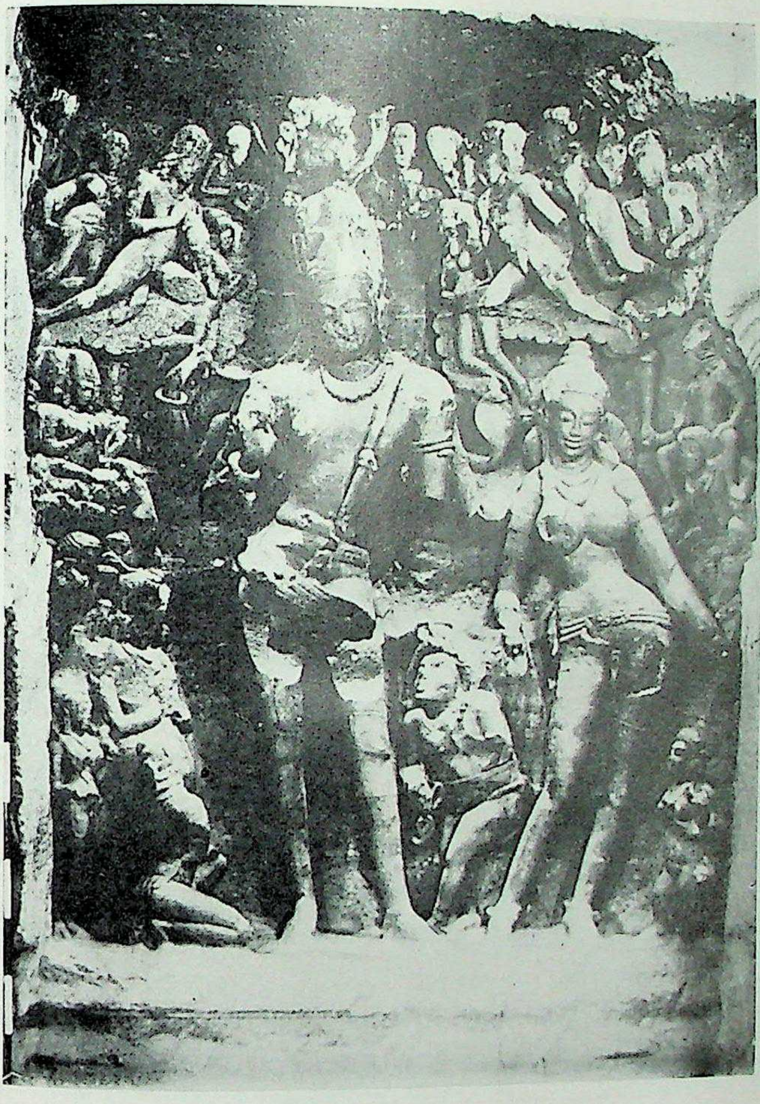


7

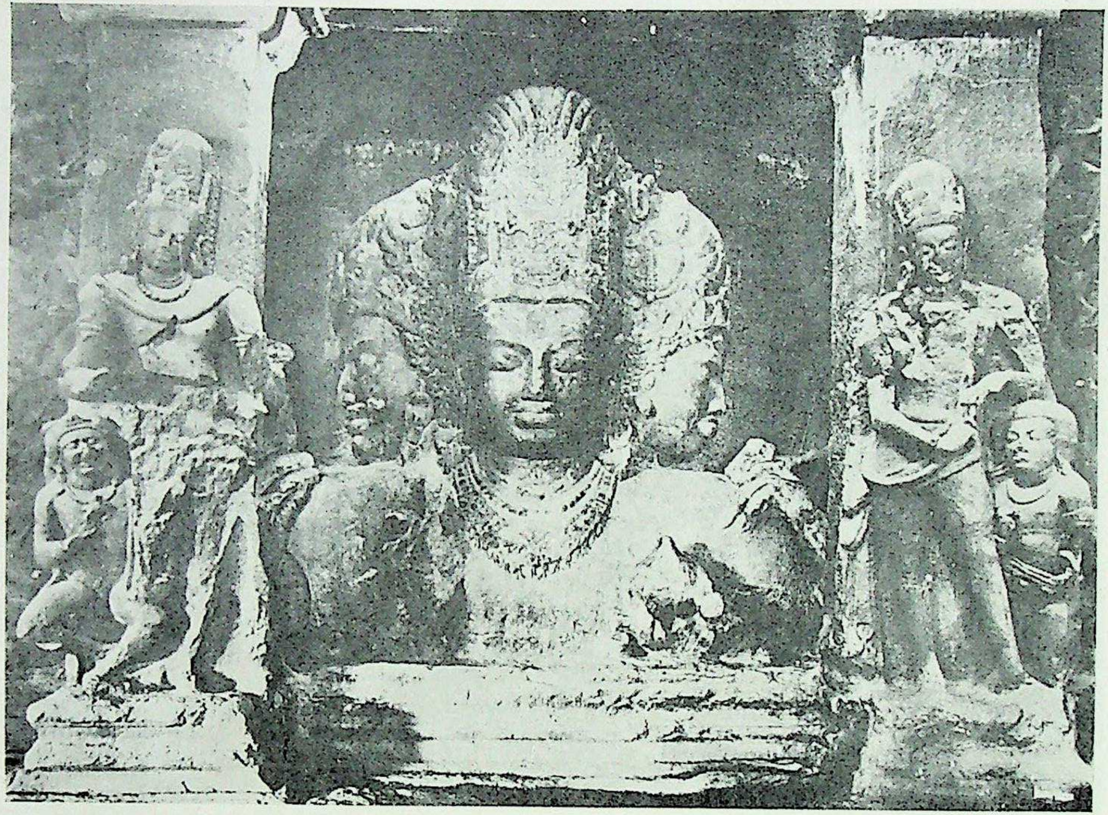
Gangadharmurti



Kalyanasundaramurti

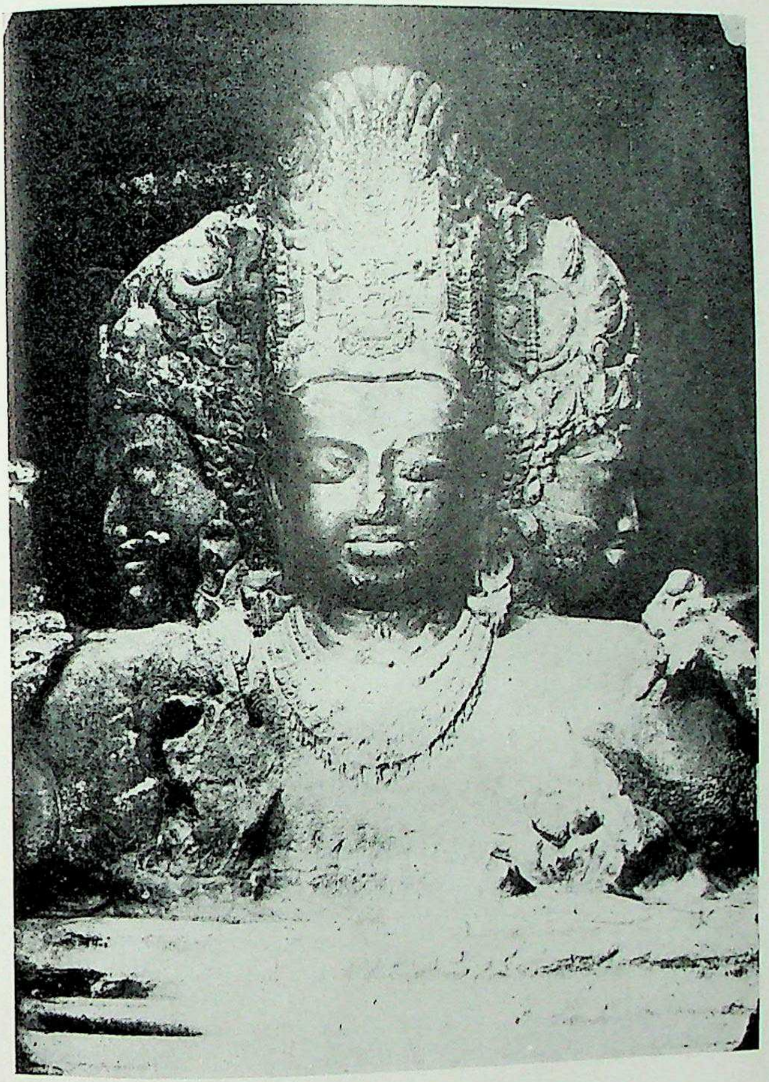


Gangadharmurti

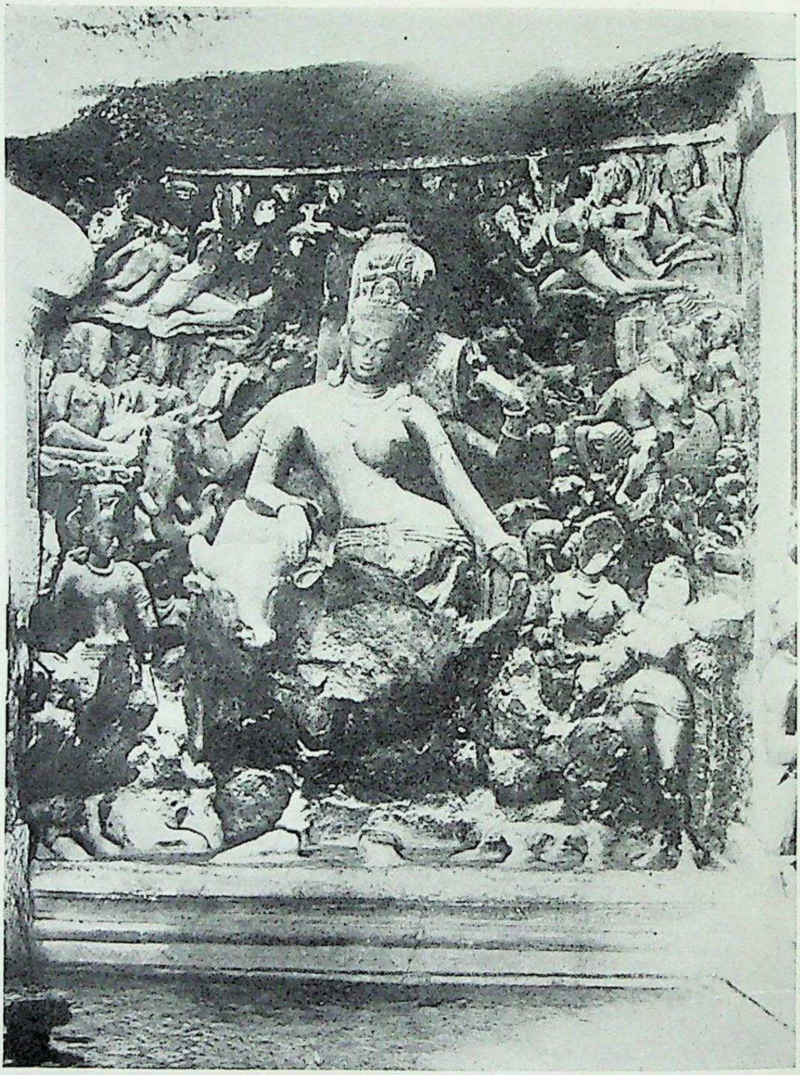


Maheshmurti with Dvarapalas

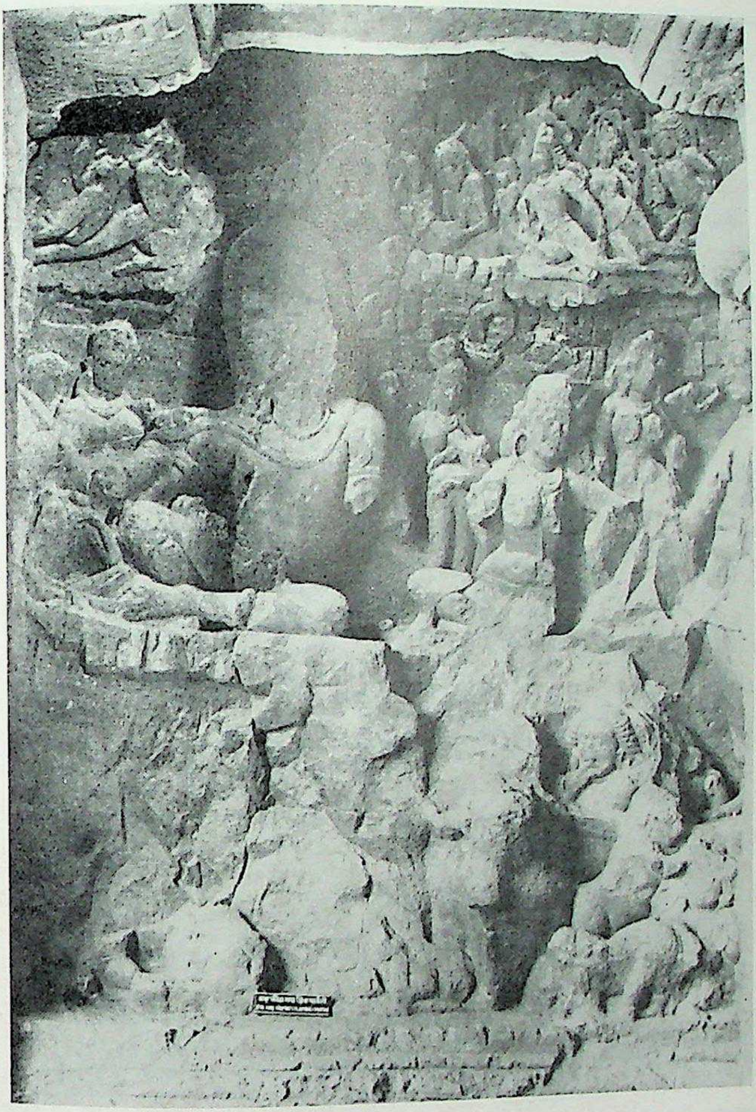
8



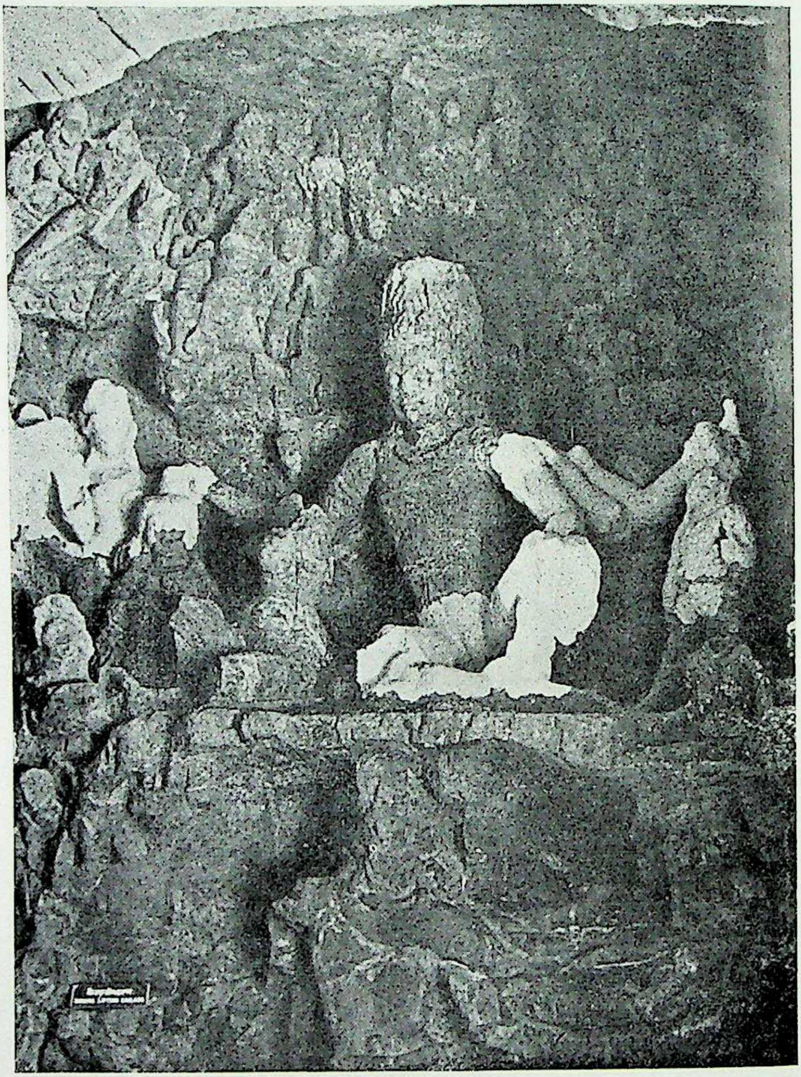
Maheshmurti



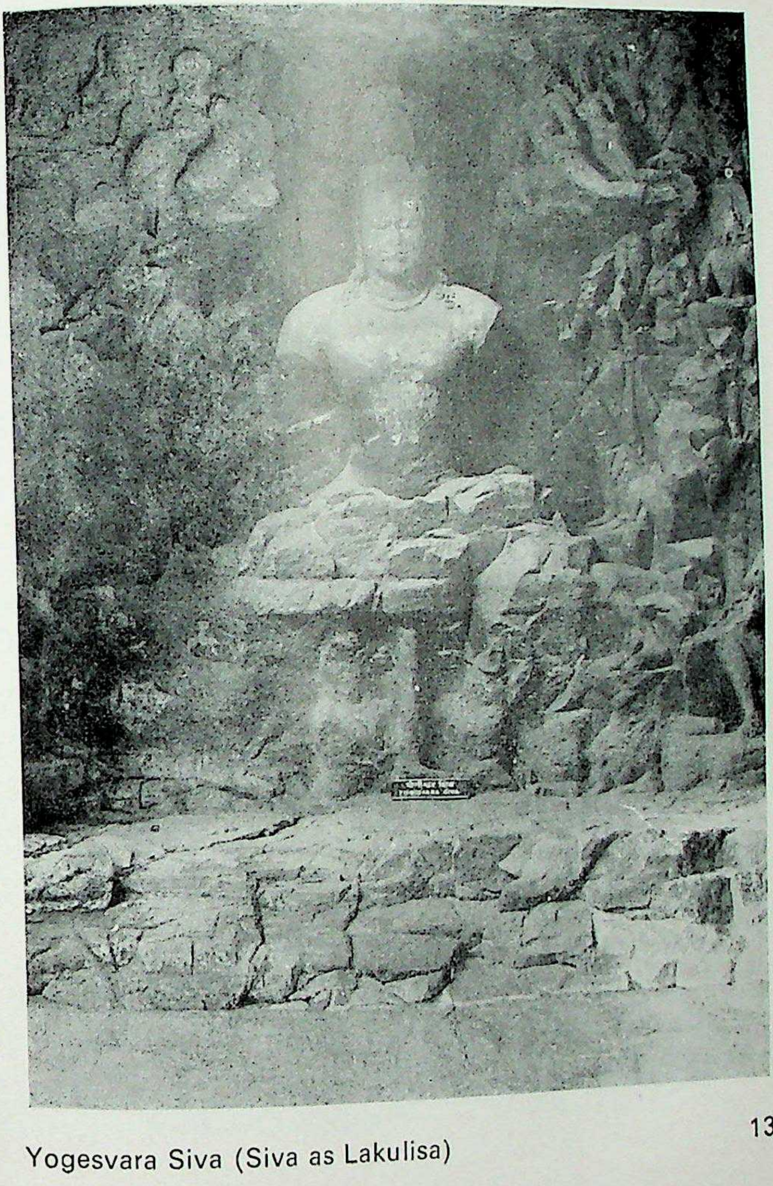
Ardhanarisvara



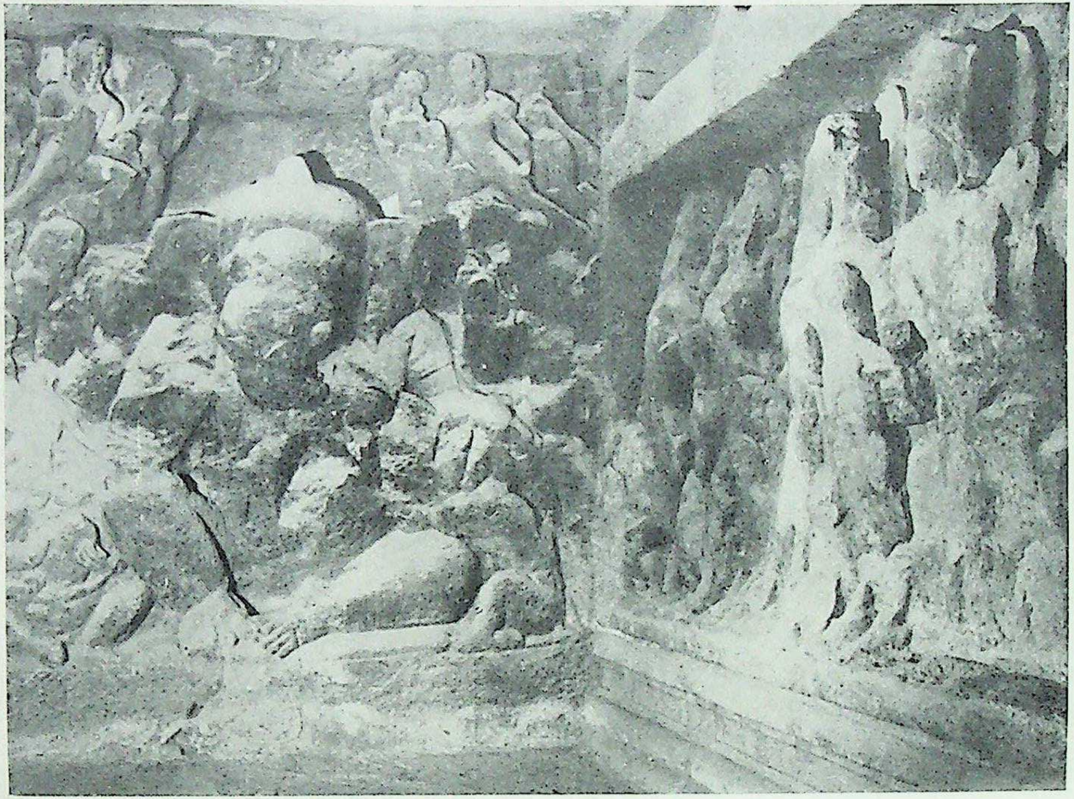
Siva-Parvati on Kailasa Playing



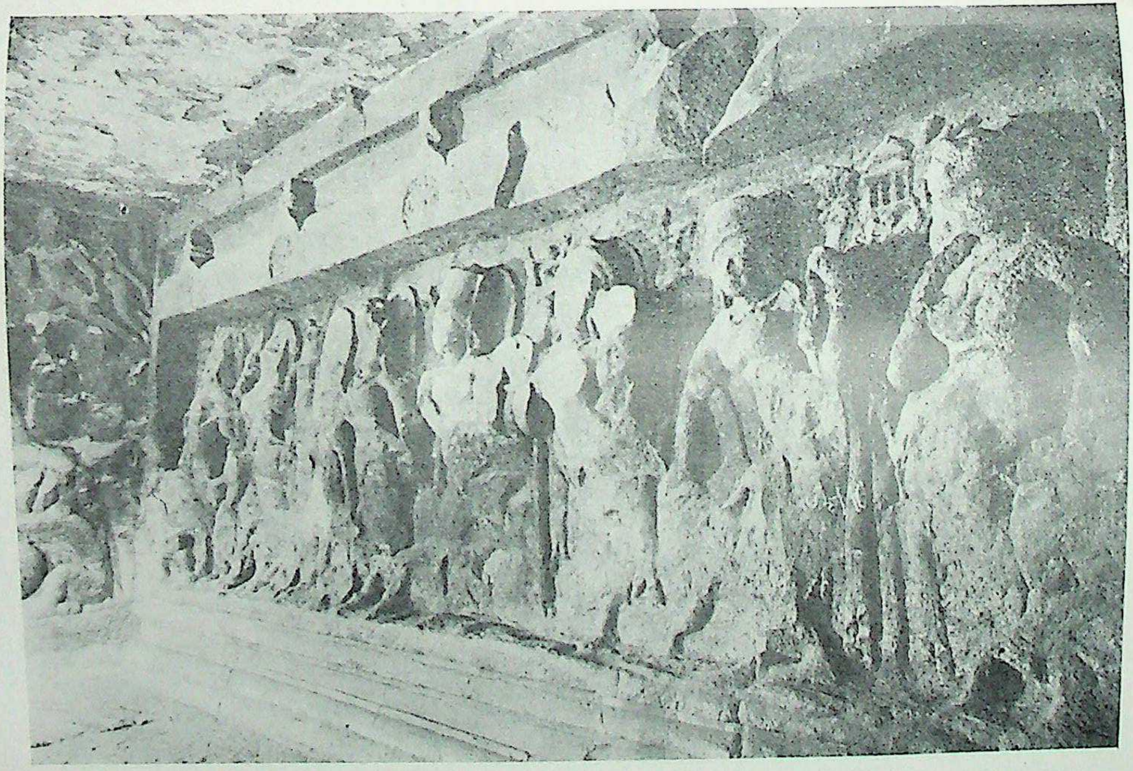
Ravana Shaking Kailasa



Yogesvara Siva (Siva as Lakulisa)

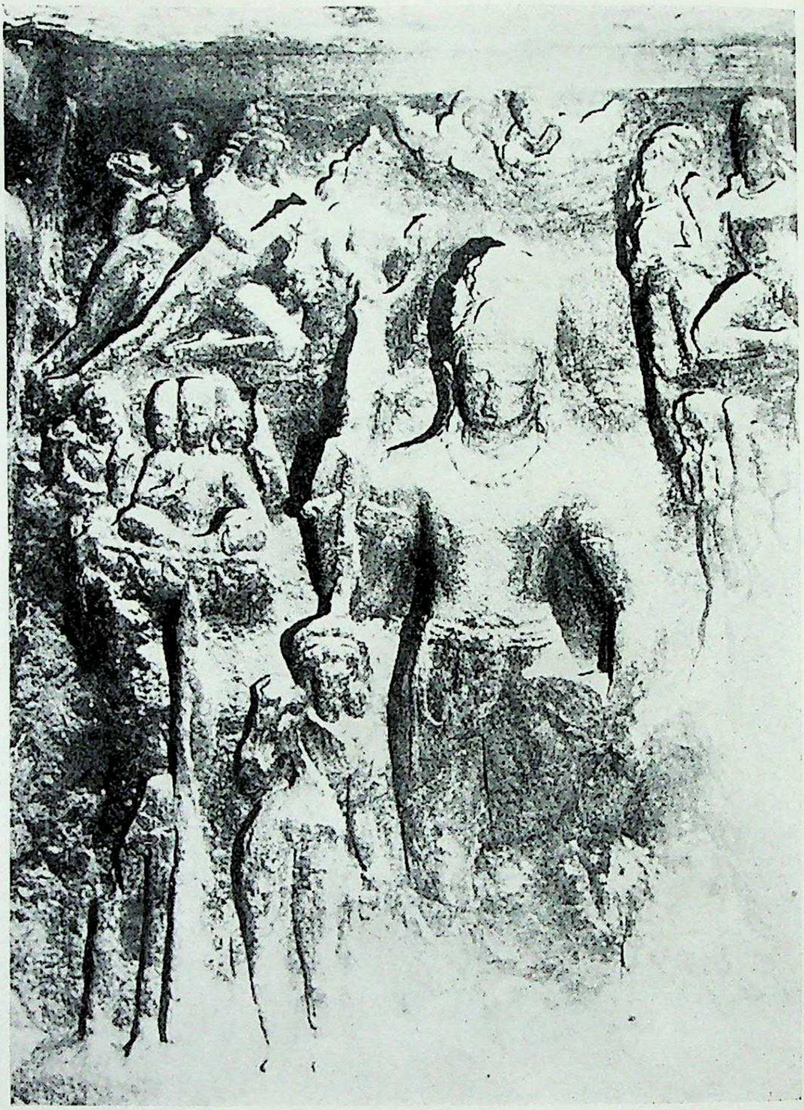


Ganesh from Matrika Shrine

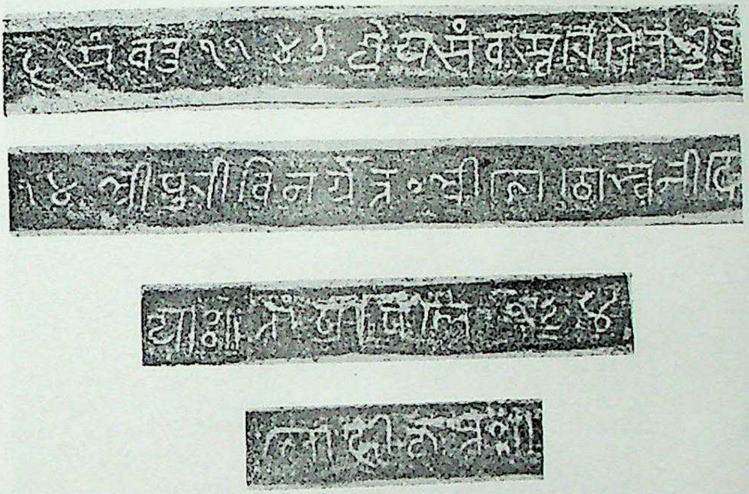


Matrika Panel from Matrika Shrine

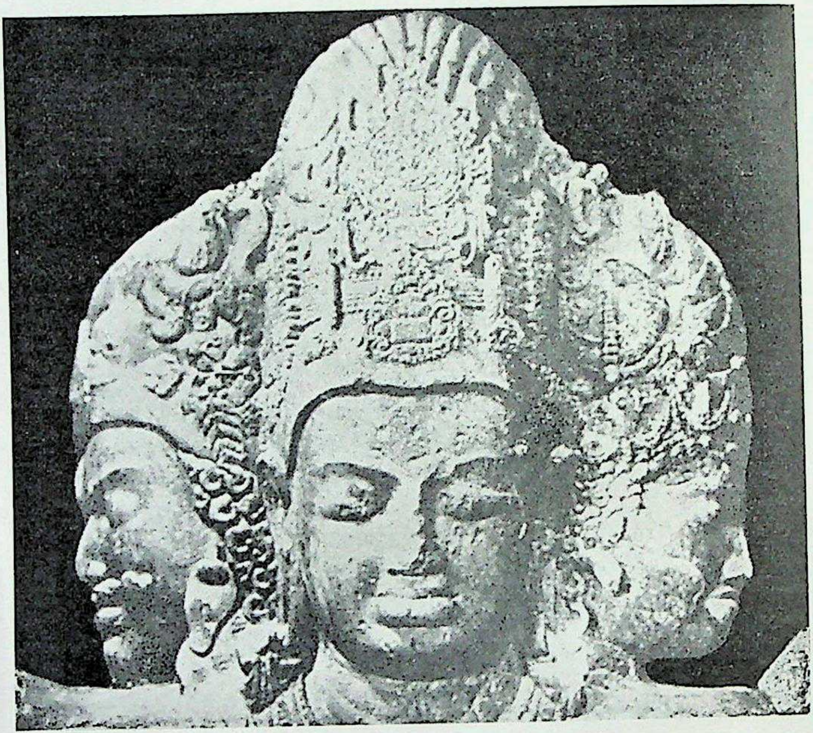
15



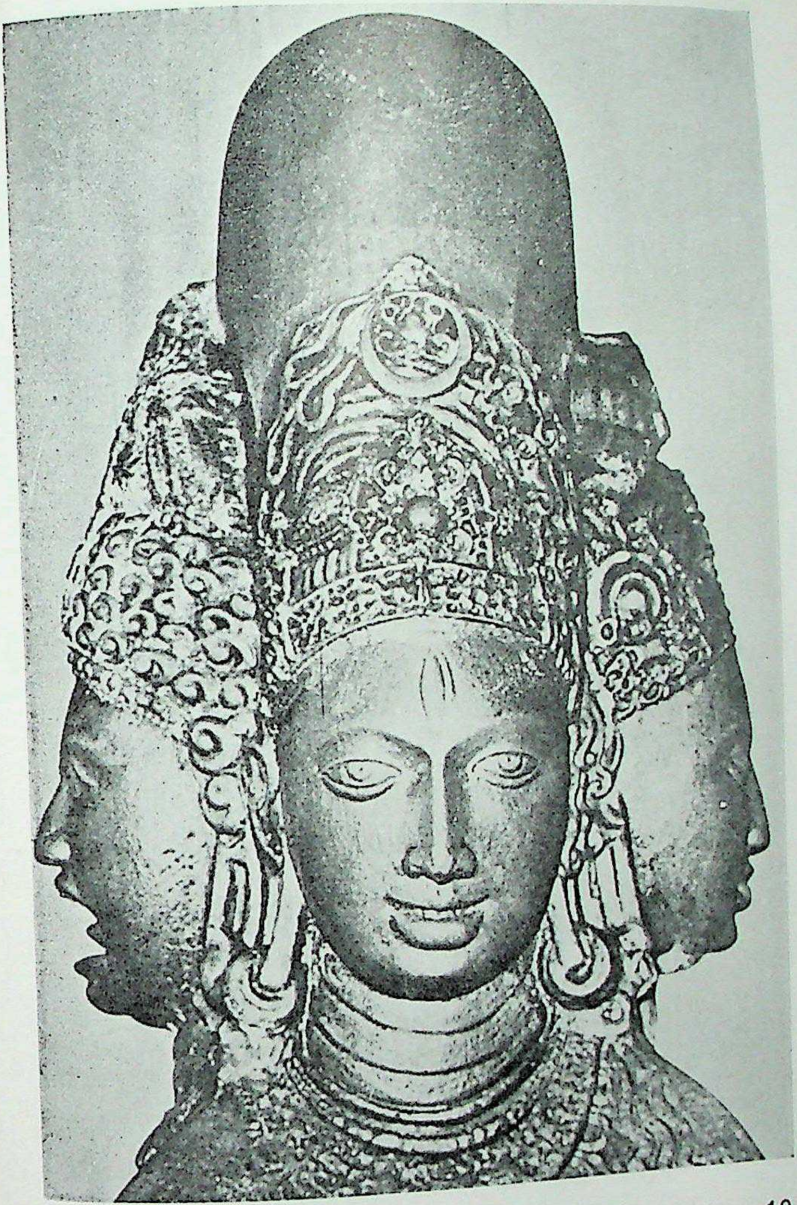
Kartikeya from Mathura Shrine



Inscriptions

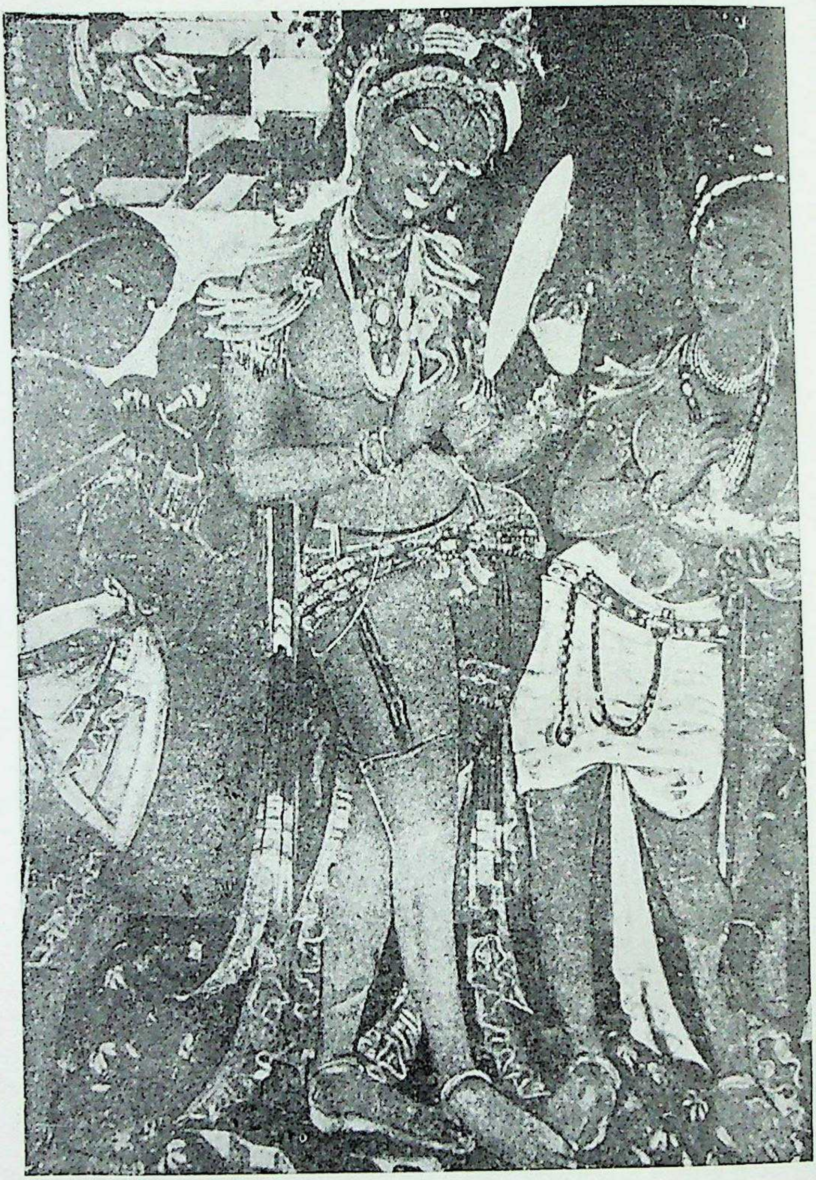


Elephanta—Maheshamurti (Sadashiva) Detail

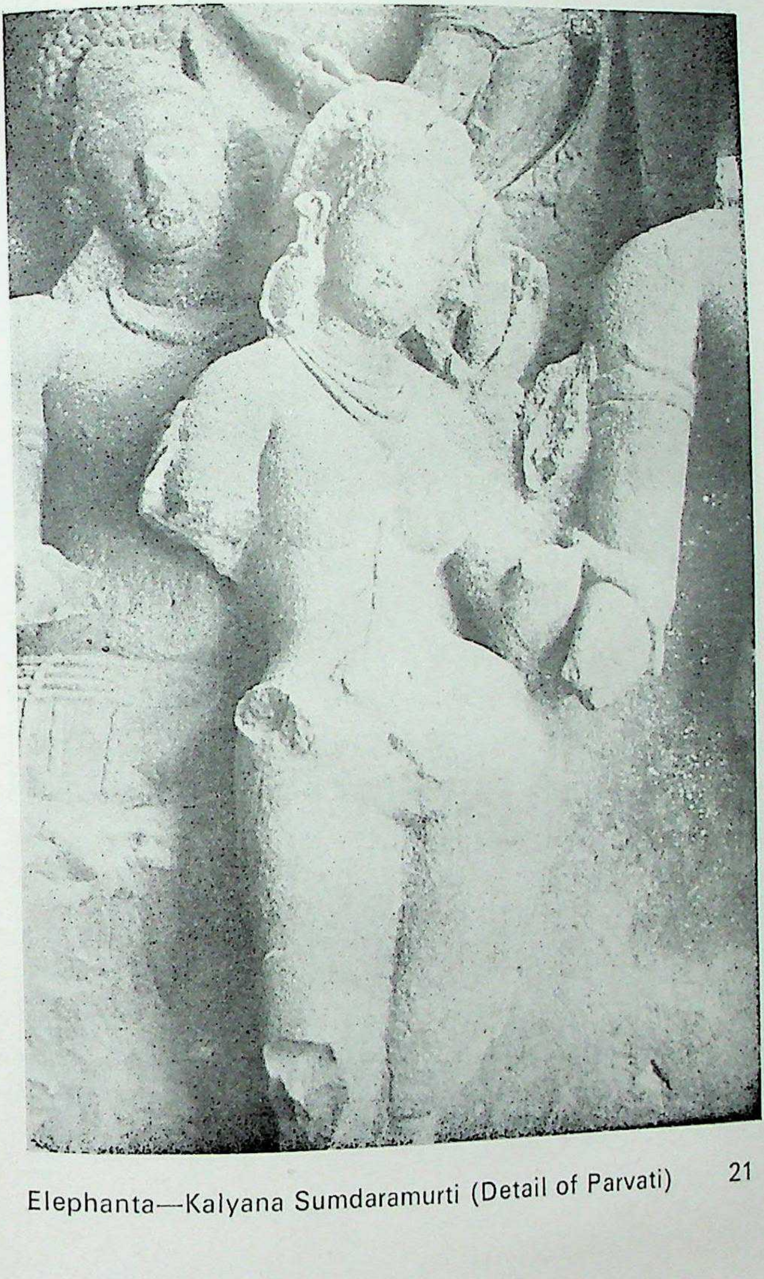


19

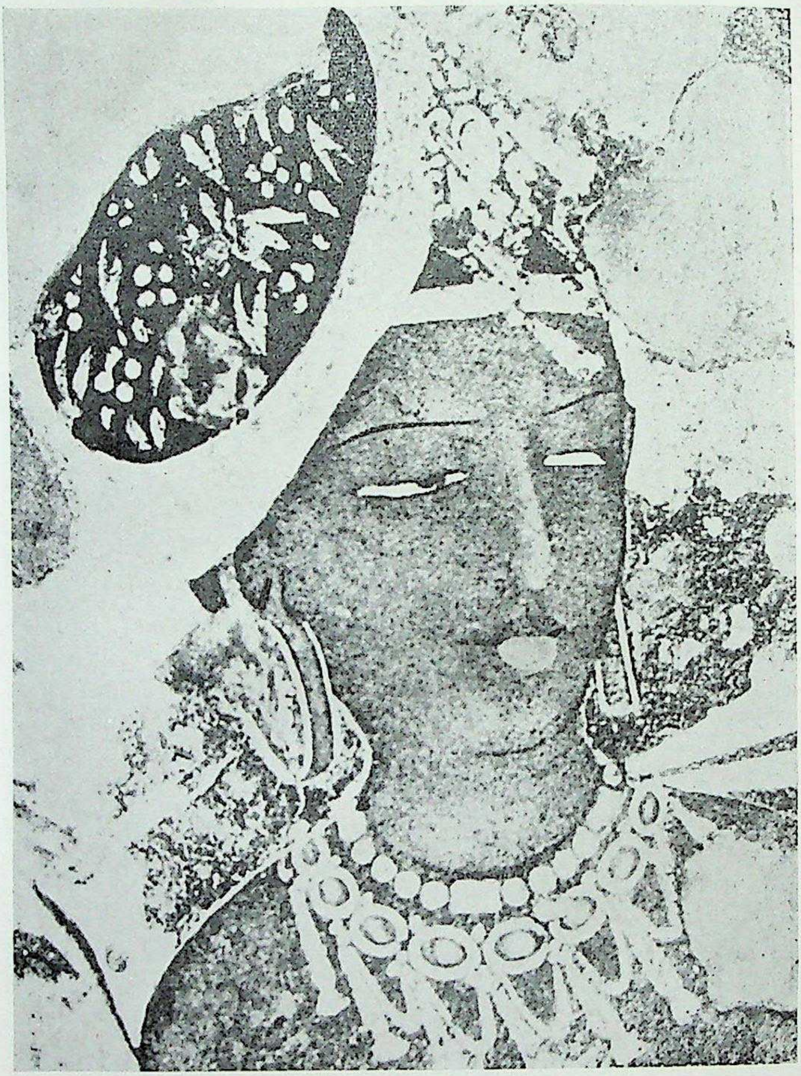
Nachna Kuthara—Chaturmukha lingam



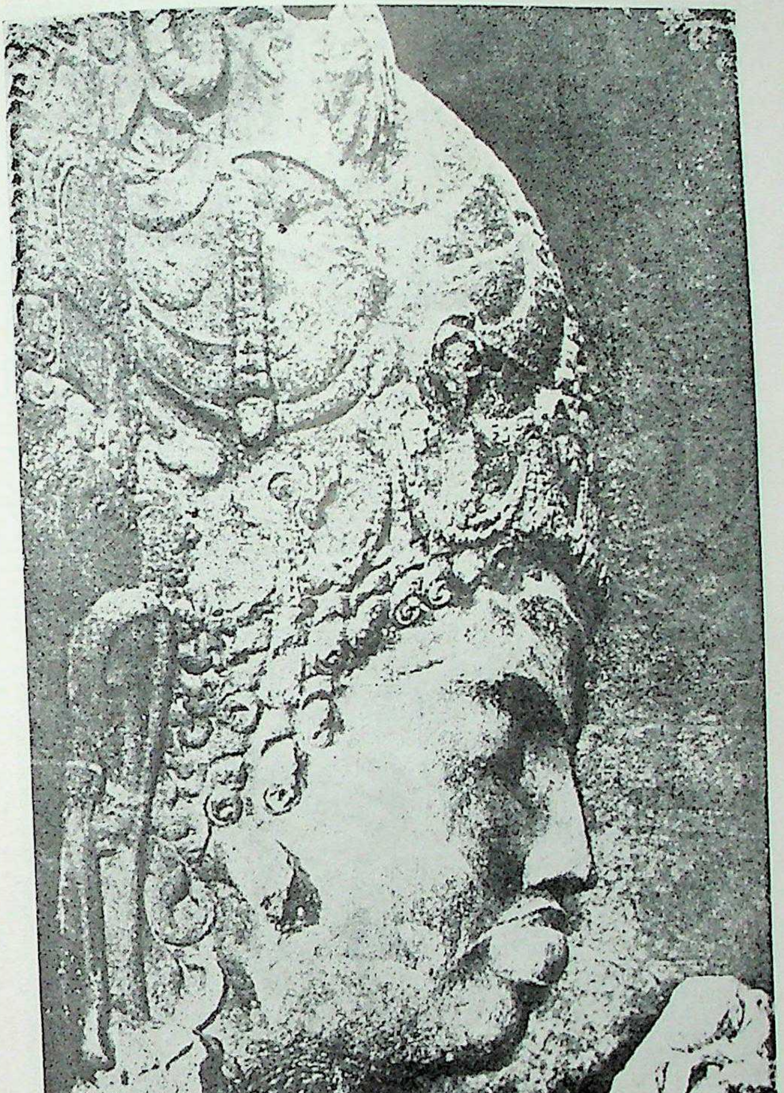
Aganta—Lady at Toilet



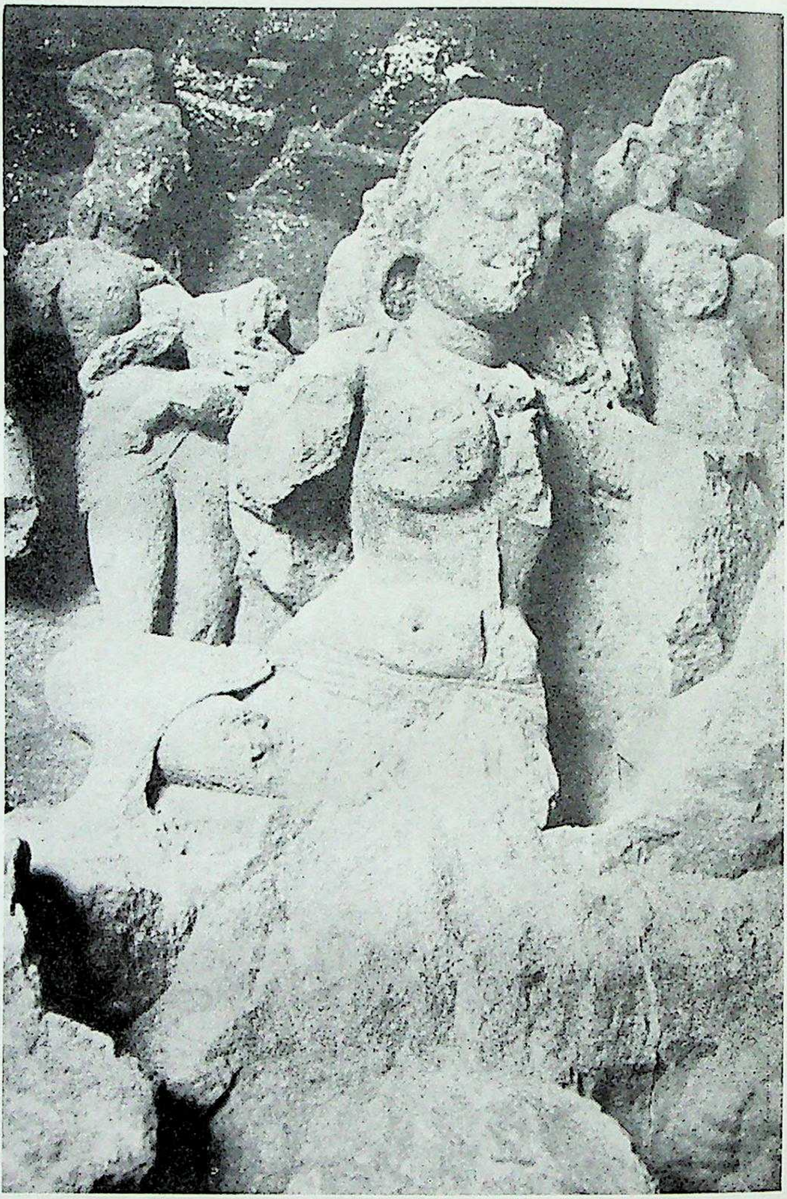
Elephanta—Kalyana Sumdaramurti (Detail of Parvati)



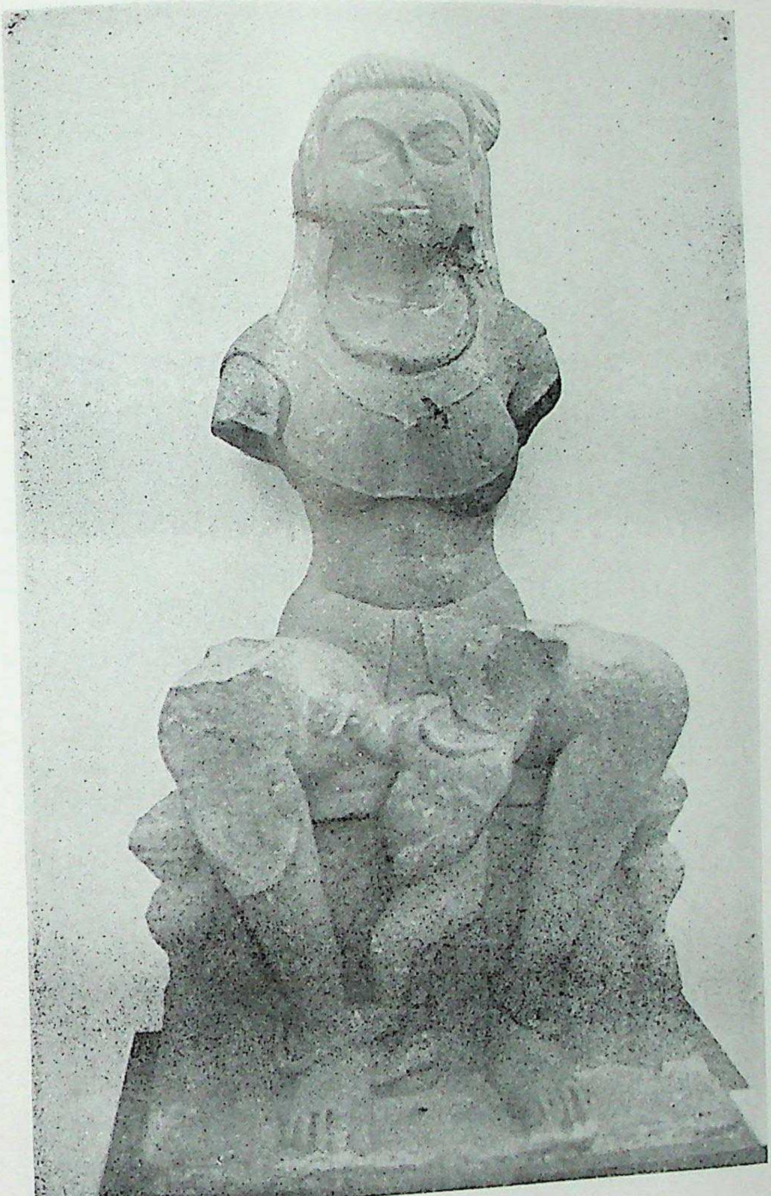
Elephanta—Uma Vamadeva Detail from Plate 18



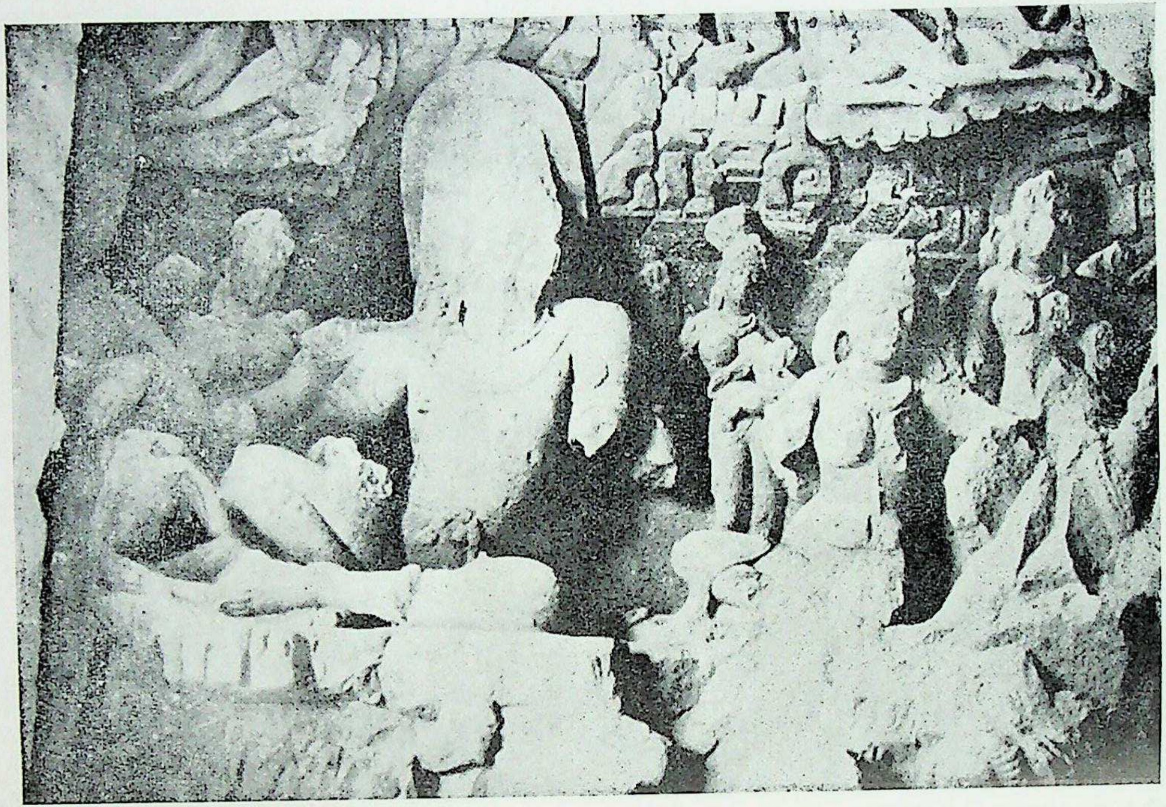
Ajanta—Apsara Detail



Elephanta—Uma Maheshwar
(detail of Parvati from Plate 26)



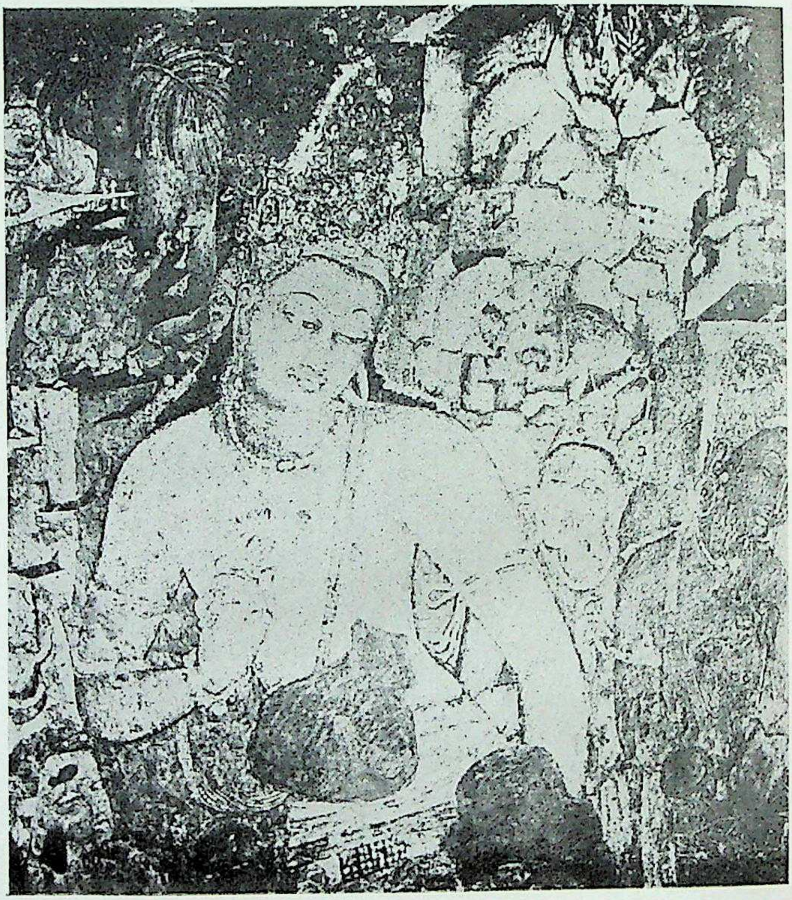
Besnagar—Matrika (National Museum)



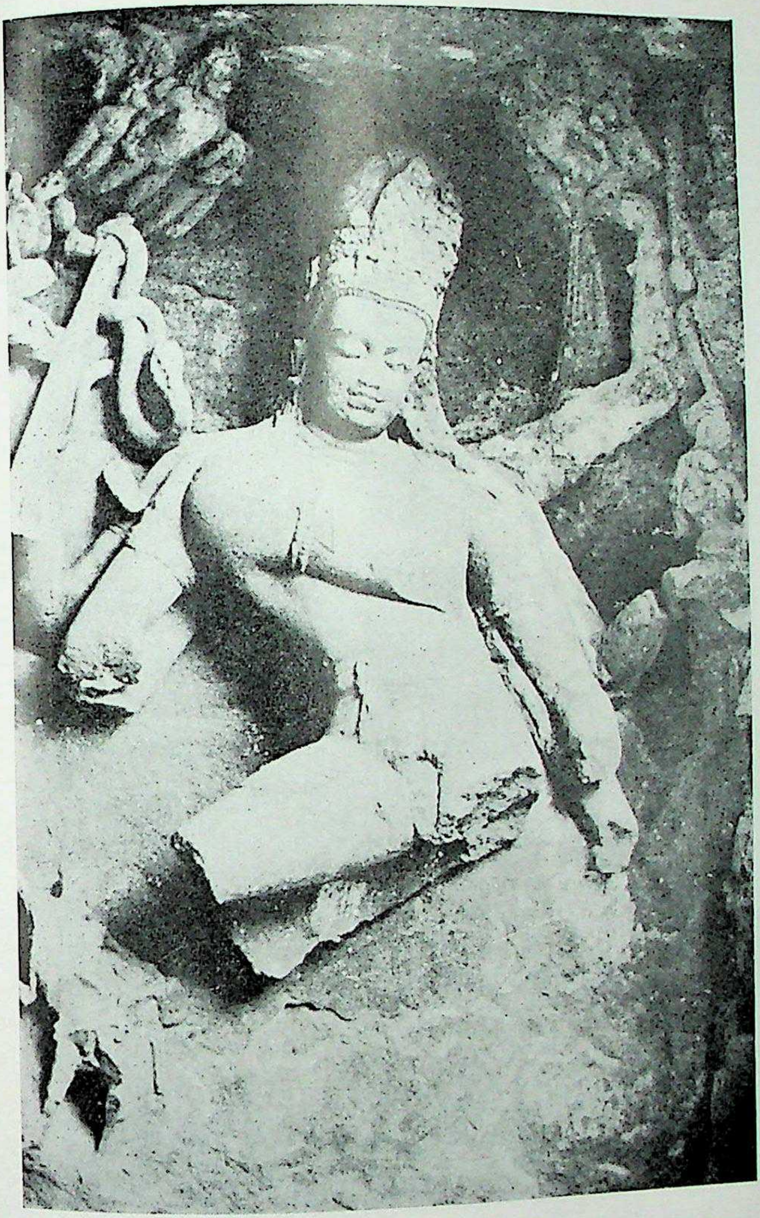
26

Elephanta—Upper portion of Uma Maheshvara

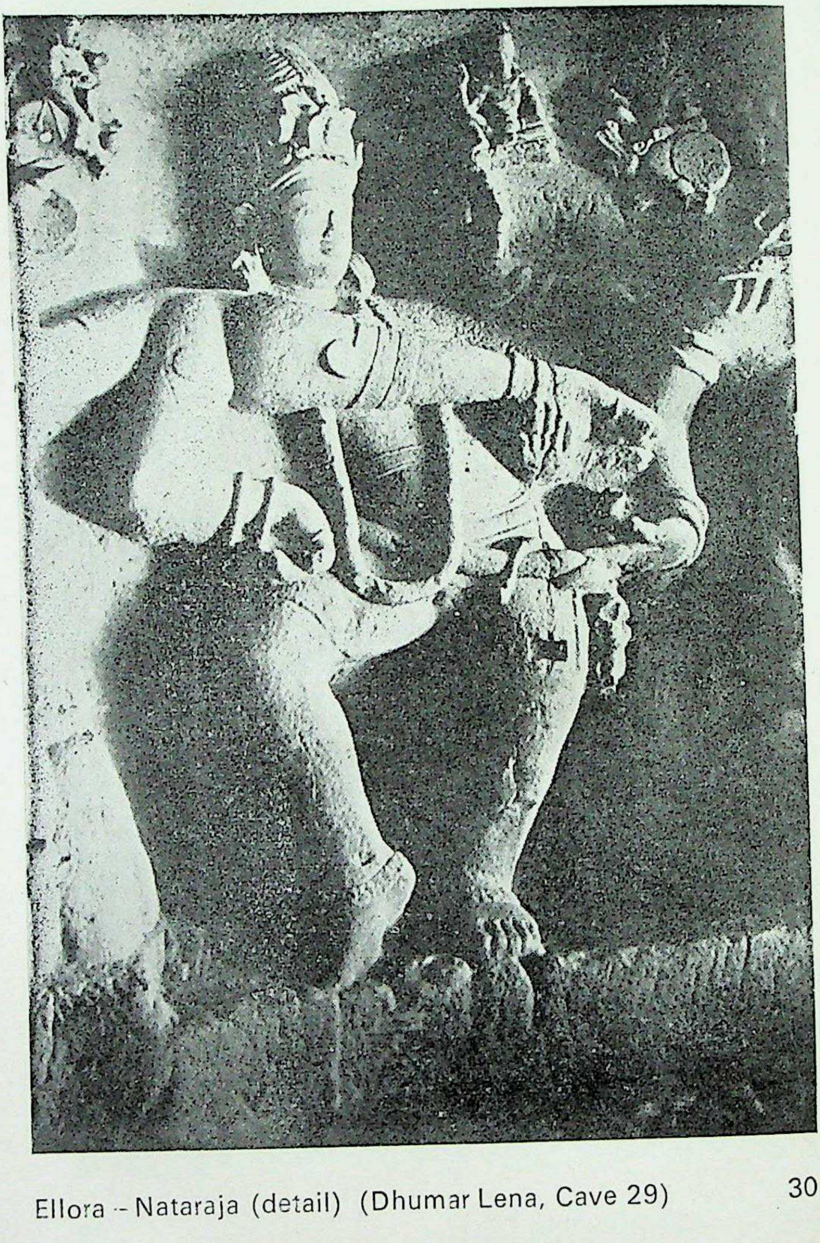
Ellora—Ravana shaking Kailash (Kailashnath Temple)



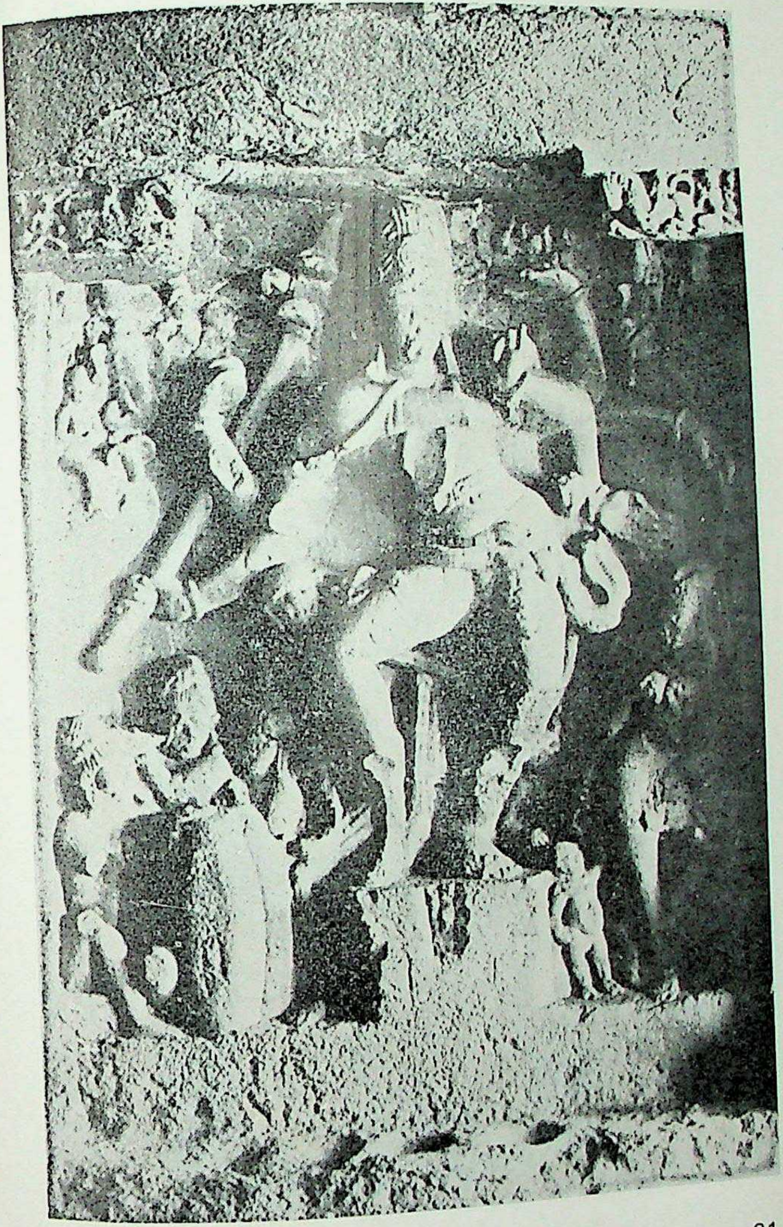
Ajanta—Avalokitesvara Padmapani—Detail



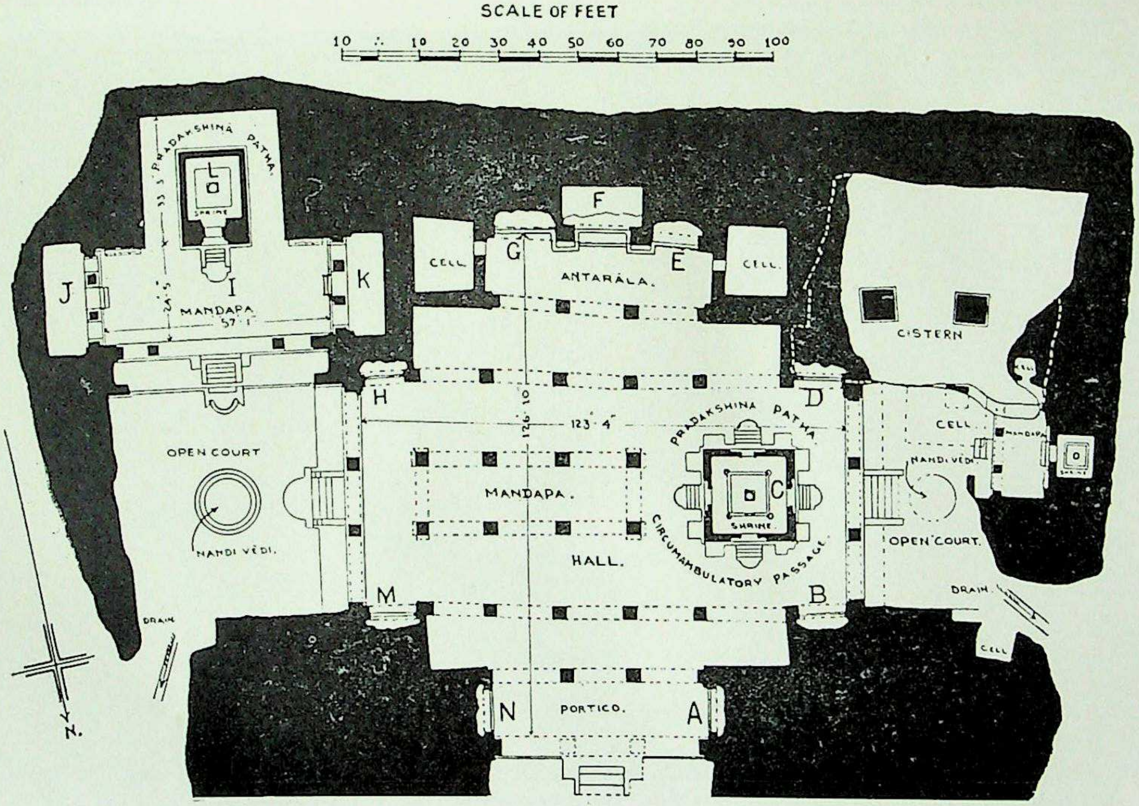
Elephanta—Nataraj—Detail



Ellora – Nataraja (detail) (Dhumar Lena, Cave 29)



Ellora—Nataraja (Ravana Ki Khai-Cave 14)


SCALE OF FEET
10 ∴ 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
33' 3" PRADAKSHINA PATHA.
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126' 10"
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PRADAKSHINA PATHA
CELL
MANDAPA
NANDI VEDI.
OPEN COURT
NANDI VEDI.
MANDAPA.
C
SHRINE.
HALL.
CIRCUMAMBULATORY PASSAGE.
OPEN COURT.
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B
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Plan of the Main Cave

ELEPHANTA IN THE CONTEXT OF EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SAIVA SCULPTURE

RATAN PARIMOO

I

The astounding richness of Indian sculptural tradition is gradually being recognized all over the world. The characteristic of acient Indian sculpture is not only so distinct but that it is qualitatively so very superior that it will not be an exaggeration to claim for it a major place among one of the unique sculptural traditions in the world along with that of Egypt and Greece.

A critic has rightly said that "sculpture might be defined, as a whole, as: "An art which consists in choosing and combining, in different ways, constructional facts of the living form in order to produce rhythmic arrangements fitted to express the manner of thought of a nation, an epoch, and, in particular of the individual artist."[1]

This definition could very appropriately apply to the three major sculptural traditions of the world—the Egyptian, the Greek and the Indian. It is in the context of the first two of these that the achievements of the Indian sculpture must be measured. Each of these three represents a plastic language or mode, which is a unique and specific form of sculptural representation. If these modes are taken as belonging to self-contained cultural matrices, marked by a consistency of outlook as well as a process of elaboration within the restraint of persistent features, it will not be necessary to give a name to each of the modes except in terms of the culture which produced them. Since sculpture is a means of plastic expression as a language capable to express forms of thought– one could talk of "Plastic Thought" which is also a brain activity, therefore, necessarily conditioned by relevant religious and

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social milieu. "Plastic Thought" and "Plastic Form" are not only simultaneous activities but "Plastic Thought" seems to come into existence, completed by and inseparable from, its visible transcription in form.[2]

Common to these three modes of sculpture is the visualisation and realisation of their gods through the human figure i.e. the persistent obsession with the human form and yet what they portray have notable distinctions. Such distinction can be observed, for instance, in the computation of anatomical relationships, although each of these traditions evolved a complex system of proportions for the idealized human form. The celebration of the human form is taken to a high degree of concern even in Indian sculpture but it is the Greeks who pushed forward such a celebration to eventually become an end in itself. By contrast, the Egyptian civilization produced (from c. 3000 B.C. to c. 1000 B.C.) a highly formalized sculpture which remained for ever dominated by the nature of the material used and the religious symbolism in the Hegellian sense.[3] Yet precisely these very features gave Egyptian sculpture an aura of mystery which was eschewed by the Greeks but retained by the Indian sculptors despite displaying an equal interest in the sheer beauty of the human body.

The differences between Greek and Indian attitude to human figure have been very perceptively analysed by Stella Kramrisch: "The Greeks made gods of their marble statues of perfectly proportioned men. In India, the discipline of Yoga not only controls the physical body, but purges and rebuilds the whole living being. The human body transformed by Yoga is shown free not only from defects, but also from its actual physical nature. The sensation of lightness of release from the bondage of physical body induced by the practice of Yoga, produces the 'subtle body.' The subtle body is filled by breath and nourished by the pulsating sap of life. It is the vehicle for states of realization above the physical state; in art, it is their receptacle, conduit and shape. The Greeks took as their ideal the disciplined, athletic physical body. The Indians took the disciplined state, or subtle body of inner realization, on which to model the shape of their images. Greek sculptors were not necessarily atheletes, nor were all Indian artists Yogis. In either case, training and environment equipped them with their own characteristic types and sensibilities."[4]

Indian sculptors have proved their extra-ordinary creative talent and superior skilled craftsmanship in carving magnificent sculptures from the live rock, in forging exquisite figurines in metals and in moulding varieties of objects in clay. Many an Indian sculptor must have been highly proficient in his technical skills and sufficiently familiar with religious iconography who probably worked in collaboration with the learned priests on their great sculptural projects. On the other extreme were the humble craftsmen who made the village deities in perishable material like clay which were never meant to be permanent.

Norman Blake's generalizations about the art of sculpture may very appropriately apply to Indian sculpture when he proceeds to lay down that sculpture should remain within the restrictions of the material and its nature, the sculptor rejoicing in the mass, the weight and the rock quality since he thinks in masses and their limiting planes.[5] Masses should be cunningly distributed and primal fundamental facts of visible nature translated into the form required. According to Norman Blake "Form is fundamentally based on a system of planes" and carefully manipulated "depressions on either side of a convex form". In sculpture both the choice of the subject and the technique must be coordinated with that of the material resulting in "lordly domination of material presence in sculpture."[6]

Zimmer substantiates this while observing that in Indian sculpture: "Such effects are realized with such consumate ease. The works betray no trace of strain or exertion on the part of the artist craftsmen. They seem to have appeared simply as a matter of course, as the anticipated result of a traditional skill in the handling of tools and pattern..."[7]

And with specific reference to the rock-cut shrines R. Von Leyden has very succinctly expressed that "... the Deccan sculptor learned to extract the ultimate in power and subtlety from his material, learnt to play on it with the virtuosity with which a great musician masters his instrument."[8]

Over and above, the Indian sculptor was gifted with an exceptional sensitivity for "the relative importance of the facts of visible nature", consequently investing the sculptures with remarkable simplicity which is distinct from the simplicity of the archaic or the naive. Rather, it is achieved as a result of deliberate search for the elemental form and accompanied by conscious restraint.

II

Religion has provided the raison d'etre and the inspiration for the flourishing of art of sculpture in India. Sculptural forms of deities exist from about second or first century B.C. pertaining to all the three major religions of the country — Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. In Hinduism there is the practice of worshipping of Siva, Vishnu, Sakti and Surya and the cults named after these gods. All these sectarian forms of worship have developed from a few centuries before the Christian era and onwards, although the Hindu or the Brahmanical cults trace their ancestory from the Vedic age.[9] Historically speaking the earliest sculptures as they exist in ancient monuments belong to the Yaksha cult as well as the earlier phases of Bhagwatism (as revealed by Yaksha, Naga and Balarma images).[10] But it is in Buddhist sculptures that we observe the first attempts at giving a human form to the abstract concept of deity in the particular sense that it can be called "anthropomorphism." This phenomenon implies the worshipping of god in the concrete form of an idealised human being into which are infused the world-view and the philosophical standpoint of the appropriate cult.[11] Before such a development took place, the sculptors portrayed the deity aniconically through symbols such as Boddhi tree, a pair of feet or an empty throne. The early Yaksha, Naga and Surya images were merely human figures carrying attributes to serve as icons. But the human image of the Buddha was not only a profound achievement in plastic form of the idea of Buddhahood, it also posed a great challenge to all subsequent sculptors when attempting to give form to Hindu, especially Saiva concepts.

The beginning of Saiva sculptures may be traced in the cylindrical lingams as a necessary precedent before the deity could be depicted anthropomorphically in a wide range of sculptural and iconographic variations. Such a philosophical realisation was a great achievement on the part of the Indian sculptor. Scholars like Gopinath Rao,[12] Ananda Coomaraswamy,[13] J.N. Bannerji[14] and recently Sivaramamurti[15] have done considerable research and study to unravel and explain the beauty, the majesty and the philosophical implications of the Saiva sculptures.

The origin of the Siva goes back to the Vedic Rudra (the deity of destruction personified as whirl-wind) who is beginning to assume pre-eminence among all the other gods as is indicated in the Satarudriya of Yajurveda.[16] Subsequently the Svetasvetara Upanishad attributes him most of the powers which are now associated with this great god.[17] Later on in the Puranas, after the beginning of Christian era, many myths and charitras were woven around him as indicated in Siva, Skanda and Linga Puranas.[18] Many sculptural representations owe a lot to such myths. The Siva icons are described in such ancient texts as Vishnudharamottara Purana[19] and Amsumadbhedagama[20]. Ecstatic literary descriptions have been very devotedly composed by Kalidasa and many Tamil Saivite writers.[21]

Perhaps the earliest sculptural representation of Siva is the Gudimallam lingam of the second century B.C. which points to his genesis as a fertility god and to his Dravidian origin, although he might have been worshipped as early as the Indus Valley civiliastion on the basis of the Pashupati seal.[22] Phallic stones as prototypes of the lingam, have also been found at Mohenjodaro probably in use more than four thousand years ago.[23] The Gudimallam lingam combines both a full human figure and naturalistic phallus which eventually takes on an abstract cylindrical form, rounded on the top and fixed on to a pithika base. The phallic emblem has also other references as the axis of the universe itself and embodiment of Sakala-Niskala concept, i.e. having body and form and at the same time being formless.[24]

Related to the lingam form are the Mukhalingas that is the ekmukhalinga and the chaturmukhalinga. These again combine the columner and the human form of Siva. The face in the ekmukhalinga is like a sudden effulgent emergence of God from the abstract cylindrical shaft. A number of such lingas are found from the Gupta period.[25] The chaturmukhalinga actually represents five aspects of Siva, the face on the West, Sadyojata, that on the North — Vamadeva, the Southern Aghora and the Eastern face is Tatpurusha. The fifth face Isana — expected to be on the top is never represented because it is believed that it is beyond even the comprehension of the yogis. These five faces are collectively called Panchabrahmas.[26]

Mention must be made of the Lingodbhava images which are also like vertical shafts in the middle of which is revealed a full human form of Siva. On top of it is shown Brahma/gander and below the Vishnu/varaha which refer to the myth of Siva appearing as a pillar of fire to establish his triumph over the other two earlier gods. The sculptural representation has been appropriately termed as the phenomenon of expanding or growing form.[27]

The most magnificent sculpture in which is fully realised the symbolism and the philosophical concept of Siva Mahadeva is the one at Elephanta, earlier known as Mahesamurti.[28] Sculpturally it represents a continued experimentation with the variations on the lingam form and iconography and therefore it could be characterised as a gigantic mukhalinga emerging from and unlimited and nebulous darkness where only three faces are shown.[29] The Sadyojata on the west cannot be seen as it is assumed to lie behind the central face. This is the eastern face called Tatpurusha, in which the impassiveness and august serenity of Siva is made manifest. The moving satanic countenance of the skull-crowned wrathful Aghora Bhairava, the destroyer, is on the left which is balanced by the youthful peace and beauty of Uma's face on the right. The samadhi state of Tatpurusha had prompted Stella Kramrisch to observe: "The likeness of man became merged into the presence of God. Having absorbed the forms of breathing life and the symbols of abstract meaning, their union was sealed by the inward look of the countenance. Holding its breath, the body pauses, while over its face comes an expression of listening to the stillness of life that is at one withself."[30] In these characteristics Maheshamurti is a logical sequel to the most serene Buddha sculptures which it in its turn surpasses.

This collossal triad was at one time thought to represent the Hindu trinity of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and

Siva the destroyer. But now they are generally accepted as the perfect embodiment of the composite iconographic concept of Siva's omnipotence, omniscience and pre-eminence as well as time and eternity, creation and sustenance. In some recent publications it has been re-identified as "Sadasiva" as the specific iconographic form of Siva with five faces.[31] (Plates 18 & 19)

Another multiheaded image is the Parel Siva which has an intriguing iconographic character. In it two extra heads are shown above the life size figure of Siva with a further pair of heads emanating from each of the lateral sides making in all seven heads. Certain scholars interpret it as Siva, the Saptaswaramaya, as musical master personifying the seven notes, thus giving him the added significance of the great deity of music.[32] It must be a contemporaneous work belonging to the same phase as Elephanta. U.P. Shah has made an interesting suggestion that the similarities between the samapada sthanak Siva images of Samlaji and that of Parel postulate a relationship between Western Indian school and Elephanta sculptures.[33]

In the Mukhalingas, the sculptors combined the abstract shaft-like cylindrical form with the human head and adopted the meditating face of the Yogi for the principal mukha (as had been done in the case of Buddha sculptures) to contrast with other faces, each given an appropriate expressional variation in what was a very ingenius and creative solution.[34] It can be observed that earlier Siva faces have wide open eyes with prominent vertical or horizontal *trinetra*, more to suggest "anger" rather than benignity. But it still remains a mystery as to the tentative beginnings made by Indian sculptors in handling the full human figure with a view to incorporate Siva ideology. The Gudimallam lingam Siva is only an adaptation of a Yaksha type figure addorsed to the lingam form. Yet it can only be called an icon as also the Siva image ascribable to early Gupta period which is very much like a Boddhisattva type figure holding a vessel in his left hand in the manner as is associated with Maitreya.[35] What distinguishes it as a Siva image is the trisul in one of the four hands and the Urdhwa linga. This ithiphallic aspect has subsequently been retained always in the images of Siva. The stiff Samabhanga posture is also assumed by the principal central figure in the Parel Siva.

Even these together with other stray sculptures of the pre-Vakataka period are not sufficient enough to envisage the sudden emergence of the most profound and all-embracing sculptural creation of Siva depicted as the lord of dance in the Natesa or the Nataraja images. Best known and most familiar of these are the South Indian bronzes of the Chola period, from 10th century onward.[36] But these Nrityamurtis, as they are called, are once again composite representations of Siva. The cosmic dance, Tandava, symbolically portrays the destructive aspect of Siva—the enactment of the end of the world as the basis of recreation.[37] A benign smile on his face, his beautifully lithe body gracefully balanced on the right leg resting on the apsmara, he gently lifts his left leg in Bhujangatrasita across the knee of the other leg. The two main hands are in asamyukta position, one in abhaya and the other in lola hasta. Rest of the hands carry the many attributes, snake, dhamaru, flame and khatvanga.

The swaying locks of the jata are touching the rims of the encircling prabbavali adding to the continuity of the movement. The rythmic continuity of the dance also creates an impact of dynamic stability. The trampled apasmara symbolises the victory over ignorance and the pointing toe of the left leg, removes the mayajal, which also actually initiates the spin of the whirling movement. As lord of Chidambaram, according to the South Indian Saiva saints, Nayanars, this is the form in which he reveals himself to his Bhaktas and captures their hearts. Thus these bronze images are the finest creations of the Indian aesthetic sensibility.

But still earlier realizations of the Nataraja concept are the great high reliefs in stone at the famous cave shrines, like Badami, Elephanta and Ellora of sixth, seventh and eighth centuries. At Ellora stands the imposing Kailasnath temple and related complex of cave shrines, filled with numerous Saiva sculptures. It will be seen that Elephanta Natesvara is one of the earliest of dancing images of Siva. It is also important to observe that the Bhujangatrasita Karna appropriate to the tandava where the left leg is raised and crosses over the right knee, is very rarely attempted in stone with exception of a few like the one at Gangaikondacholapuram

Ajanta cave facades. With the resurgence of Hinduism the artist's imagination seems to have been fired by the certain rivalry to Buddhism, by the exciting possibilities of representing various Brahmanical gods as they were being conceived in the Puranas whose episodic contents were found most stimulating and offering wide scope for sculptural realization. It can be generalized that it concretized into two directions—one was in the episodic reliefs which carried on from the "narrative" quality of the early Buddhist reliefs, through Brahmanical Udaigiri and Deogarh matured at Elephanta and at Mahabalipuram to continue through certain group of reliefs at Ellora like those in cave 14 (Ravan Ki Khai). The other trend may be called "synoptic", reducing the episode to the minimum as had been a major feature in the Gupta Buddhist reliefs at Sarnath which too is found in a number of Brahmanical reliefs at Ellora, Badami, Pattadakal. This synoptic trend eventually replaced the episodic approach minimizing the Pauranic content and paved the way for strict iconographic discipline. The development of Hindu iconography must be seen in this context.

The question of the relationship of Elephanta with other monuments in the Deccan areas is, therefore, an important one which has got overshadowed by the singling out of the imposing Maheshamurti image for lavish praise.[45] As a cave shrine, the immediate comparison with Ajanta and Ellora is obvious and with those that are nearer, that is Jogeswari, and Kanehri. Even Aurangabad,[46] Badami[47] and Aihole[48] have relevance. Bound up with this question of relationships is the problem of dating of Elephanta which poses many difficulties because it cannot be directly related to any ruling dynasty or monarch of Western India through inscription or any other firm evidence. Most scholars have not given due attention to this question and have assumed it to be a Chalukya/Rashtrakuta monument, contemporary to Ellora and assigned it to the date bracket of 7th to 8th century,[49] without feeling the need to give cogent reasons. I would like to submit that it can be an interesting art historical exercise to analyse Elephanta in the context of cave shrines in Western India and the evolution and exceptional character of its reliefs.

The late date had been initially proposed by Burgess on the basis of a dedicatory inscription which has recently been pointed out to be too fragmentary and worn out to serve a palaeographic evidence for dating.[50] Wide off the mark was even Goetz who not only considered Elephanta as a late monument while giving a misconceived analysis of stylistic phases of Ellora sculptures, but also concluded that "Ravana shaking Kailash" had been executed as late as 10th century having superficial sensitiveness and reflecting the style of the already decadent society.[51] In her comparative analyses of the pillar motifs Muriel Neff has pointed out the similarities between those at Badami (inscribed 578 A.D.) Dhumar Lena and Elephanta caves taking the position that Elephanta is later in the sequence than the other two.[52] Such a position cannot hold good if sculptural reliefs from all these caves are compared with each other. In spite of a perceptive stylistic analysis R. Von Leyden too considered Elephanta as a late work although representing a high point in a cycle of development in the Deccan sculpture.[53]

Although Khandalawala perceived that Elephanta was executed earlier than the dates proposed by other scholars yet he placed it in the first half of seventh century. He pronounced it to be "Post Gupta" assuming the absorption of Gupta ideals by the Deccan monuments for which he coined the phrase "Deccan Gupta".[54] But what is construed as "Deccan Gupta" should be actually considered as Vakataka (5th/6th century) which has been the stand taken by Shivaramamurti in his recent publications wherever Elephanta sculptures are alluded to.[55] Thus he has accepted the position held by Hiranand Shastri so far as he considered the Elephanta sculptures to be "early" who however mistakenly regarded them to be belonging to Gupta period which for him represented the beginning of medieval phase.[56] More precise has been Walter Spink who surmises that Elephanta was the work of craftsmen who moved into the services of Vishnukundins and Kalachuris after the fall of Vakatakas during the first half of sixth century. These dynastic rulers were Saivites and followed the Lakulish/Pashupata cult as indicated by the many representations of the deity at Jogeshwari which Spink thinks to be a kind of "trial" cave shrine in relationship to Elephanta reliefs.[57]

That Elephanta could have been carved during the later part of Vakataka rule and immediately after is a stylistic possibility which is upheld in this essay by taking recourse to many parallels between the Gupta sculpture and Ajanta on the one hand and with Elephanta reliefs on the other hand. It would appear that while Ajanta was celebrating the last flowering of Buddhist art during the Vakataka rule it also paved the pay for the emergence of Brahmanical sculpture. That the art of Vakataka period also partakes of the same "Classical" spirit which is adumberated in the Gupta ideals as enunciated by Coomaraswamy, should be seen in the context of the developmental progression within the Deccan monuments having its anticidents in sculptural reliefs such as at Amaravati. Coomaraswamy was the first to notice such a progression with reference to Gupta art.

"Gupta sculpture though less ponderous than the ancient types, is still distinguished by its volume; its energy proceeds from within this form, and it is static than kinetic, a condition that is reversed only in the medieval period. In all these respects Gupta art marks the zenith in a perfectly normal cycle of artistic evolution."[58]

This continuity of the "perfectly normal cycle of artistic evolution" is best exemplified in the female figures and in the ideal of the feminine beauty. Zimmer has given a most evocative description of these ideals while discussing the goddess in her manifestation as Parvati in the Kalyana Sundara relief at Elephanta.

"The bride's figure steeped in a deep earnestness, is stirred, beneath its outward demureness, by a most passionate emotion and incredible delight at this climax of her life; for the union is here about to be fulfilled for which she has endured the most extreme ascetic austerities."

"Her form is slender and graceful, suffused by a quality of contentment, quietness and solemnity, as befits the supreme occasion, yet she has retained something of the sweet heaviness — that more robust substantiality — which was the basic ingredient of the earlier ideal and which, as we shall see, romains to the end the fundamental Indian requirement of women."[59] As part of this requirement must also be included the perfectly rounded breasts that crowd against each other. In this regard Elephanta Parvati is also a counterpart of the "Lady at Toilet" in Ajanta.[60] (Plates 20 and 21)

Parvati represents definitely the aristocratic strain of feminity which can be generally observed in all the female figures at Elephanta (which are mostly representations of Parvati). This is in contradiction to the earthy fleshy females of Sanchi but especially those at Karle which are expressive of tribal abandon and peasant robustness.

The demure, aristocratically sophisticated Parvati appears again in the sinous tribhanga in Gangadharamurti relief, and as the langerous curvilinear female side of the Ardhanariswara. In the Uma-Maheshwara relief she is sulking and turns away her head towards her left giving a beautiful flexion to the torso. The seated Parvati in this relief and whatever remains of her in the badly mutilated relief of "Ravana shaking Kailash," where she creeps towards Siva in fright, she very closely resembles in her plastic qualities the Matrikas in Gwalior Museum,[61] which has not been noticed before and in whom a certain earthiness of the Kushana/Gupta types is still retained. (Plates 24 and 25)

That the Elephanta Parvati falls between "Gupta" and "Medieval" and perhaps is more "classical" rather than "medieval" would seem apparent if the Ellora Ganga at Rameshwara cave is taken into consideration.[62] This alluring figure has a voluptuous sensuality which had been sublimated during the Gupta-classical period. Such a growing voluptuous sensuality and attenuated sophistication is quite distinct from the earthy sensuality of pre-classical period. The former quality is to my mind one of the hall-marks of medieval female beauty and one vital point of consideration in distinguishing the "Classical" from the "Medieval". Of course other features are the coiffure, ornaments, etc. The medieval coiffure consists of the hair tucked over the back of the head to form a large bun. The hairdo of Parvati at Elephanta does not follow this fashion at all.

The close similarity between the seated Parvati at Elephanta and the Gwalior Matrikas points to a stylistic relationship between this Deccan monument and the Gupta sculpture of Madhyadesh (Malwa) further substantiated by this observation that the tall, slim and slender ideal of the masculine physique as found in the Vaishnava relief of Devgarh temple is echoed in the manner the standing Siva is represented in the Elephanta Gangadhara Murti. Moreover the Deogarh relief is based on a dramatic portrayal of narrative, which together with the yet earlier monumental Varaha relief at nearby Udaigiri usher in the neo-Brahmanical renascence in sculpture of which Elephanta was to become a major landmark.[63]

The effortless ease and relaxed manner with which Siva is seated in the Uma Maheshwara and Ravana Anugraha Murti reliefs, who is poised over one haunch as he momentarily shifts his body towards Parvati in a tender concern is yet another triumph for the Elephanta sculptors. Siva here represents a significant contrast against the rigidity of Dhumar Lena seated figures.

We may now turn to what is the most significant aspect of Elephanta i.e. the approach to space and the interactions between sculptural reliefs and architecture. Once again I would like to quote Zimmer who has been the most perceptive observer of the plastic qualities of Indian sculptures. Herein is also contained an appreciation of the magnificent dwarapala figures.

"The artists who carved the solid walls and massive columns, inspired by the material out of which they were to bring forth their work of negative sculpture, turned the interior of mountain into a subteranean realm of apparitions in which all the figures are endowed with the qualities of the living rock from which they are formed. And this rock, as the artists believed, was part of the body of Mother Earth. Hence, though exhibiting the heroic physiques of the male principle, the door guardians make manifest equally the calm forbearance of the motherly female. Their bodies are at once vigorous and tender. They are, in fact, among the most sublime and magnificent divine beings in human form ever created anywhere, either in the Orient or in the West."[64]

The genesis of the dwarpalas can be traced from the acolyte figures which appear on either side of Buddha as in the one from Katra which matured into iconographic forms of Boddhisatvas—Padmapani Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani.[65] In Buddhist caves at Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad it became the practice to represent them standing as guardian figures at the entrances of inner shrines containing seated meditating or teaching Buddhas. With the exception of the painted Padmapani at Ajanta, the Elephanta dwarapalas surpass all such above-mentioned guardian figures in their sublimity and melting quality. They seem to be deeply lost in the blissful experience of the presence of the Lord of Gods, Maheshwara, sweetly welcoming the incoming bhakta in the heavenly abode as it were. What a phantastic evolutionary development is marked by these dwarpala guardians around the linga sanctum when seen in comparison to the stiffly positioned door guardians at Pithal Khora caves of the Hinayana times.[66]

The concept of space in Elephanta reliefs is unique and needs analysis. Besides, hardly any scholar has seen sculpture of Elephanta as relief compositions and no adequate analysis has been given of these as problem of relief compositions in evolutionary sequences tracing the development of approach to relief from earlier centuries. If the reliefs at Sanchi and Barhut are very extensive and widespread, yet their scale is "small". As has been often observed, they are derived from the tradition of wood and ivory carving, consequently they show love for detail and at this stage the primary interest on the part of the sculptors was in the "narrative".[67] It is perhaps at Amaravati, that they assume characteristics proper of stone carving.

The reliefs at Elephanta are truely monumental, not only because of their larger than life size but also the way the reliefs are absorbed by architecture. The subterranean space scooped out through the rock which comprises the shrine, permeates through these reliefs, which in their turn extend the live rock into this very space. The protrusion of the volumes stretches to the maximum that the depth of the niche can permit without sparating and isolating the figures from the rock surface. Each relief is carved out in a niche which is deep, framed by massive pillars, to serve as lateral boundaries and as protruding extensions. It is within these two extreme limits that the volumes and the depths are regulated. It is in these aspects that the architectural space impinges on to the reliefs. (Plate 3)

The figures in the reliefs inevitably emerge from the floor upwards suggesting their terrestrial position as they squarely stand on the base, for instanse in the Gangadhara and Kalyansundaramurti reliefs. This is evident even where the lower portion of the reliefs is damaged. In the Ravana-anugraha and Uma-Maheshwara reliefs, which are facing each other, the base happens to be the mountain i.e. Kailash, as the matrimonial home of Siva and Parvati as dampati. The upper portions of the reliefs are invariably filled with clusters of "Khechar" figures hovering in air on either side of the principal deity. These represent Vidyadharas, subsidiary gods and other beings from the aerial or celestial space giving the upper portions the connotation of the sky. Thus each relief combines the terrestrial and celestial worlds. In the Ardhanari relief an impressive host of such celestial beings throng overhead as if rejoicing upon the most beautiful and lofty bisexual image of Siva.

In terms of the features of relief in European sculpture, relievo stiacciato indicates figures in low relief behind which space is made to receed, whereas the actual relief remains shallow, while in Baroque reliefs, figure groups in deep relief enveloped all around with space, extend out of the background as far as the architecture permits. In Elephanta, in spite of the earthly connotation of the space as analysed earlier, it has to be observed that the physical space, indeed the whole niche is transformed into conceptual space or it may be termed as the "infinite void" to accommodate the "divine vision". However, the main protagonists Siva and Parvati or Ardhanari accompanied by the Nandi bull, exist almost in free standing groups as in Baroque sculpture. Another parallel between the two sculptural approaches is that the niche is no longer taken as a foil, the shadow in it being far more important since the darkness of the recess unites with the shadows of the figure. The is another point to illustrate how architecture and sculpture are made to collaborate both at Elephanta and in the Baroque style. Light and shadow together play a very important role in Elephanta sculptures in the environmental context. Yet the actual treatment of plastic form in these sculptures is unlike that in Baroque. Instead of form submerging in light and dark, quiet surfaces and self-contained contour lines are esssential elements although sculpture as an art of corporeal masses knows no line. In this sense Elephanta sculptures are "classical". In contrast to Baroque, Elephanta sculptures have been visualised with a compelling principal view which is that from the front. This is yet another aspect it shares with what Wolfflin has characterised as "Classical".[68]

Having established the features of Elephanta reliefs it is now possible to see them as an advance over the Ajanta and Ellora Buddhist reliefs which are often frontal and planar, as examples could be cited the Bodhisatva guardian figures already discussed earlier and the Littany of Avolokitesvara reliefs.[69] Here the principal figure stands like an icon in samabhanga stance and the eight perils and lateral figures are formally arranged in vertically aligned compartments with no psychological and spatial relationship established among them. This has been precisely the achievement of the sculptors at Elephanta who have used the significant moments of the mythological episodes to determine the figure groups, their positions and stances and to serve as psychological and spatial linking factors among them. The high point of such a pre-occupation fully developed to the utmost possibilities is arrived at in the magnificent "Ravana Shaking Kailash" at Kailashnath cave of Ellora. Thus it could be an obvious conclusion that Elephanta reliefs may be seen as precedents for some of those at Ellora Brahmanical caves. (Plates 26 and 27)

At this point I would like to put forth another observation which is that Elephanta reliefs serve as a bridge between Ajanta on one hand and the Brahmanical caves at Ellora on the other hand, that is to say sculptors of Elephanta profitted from the Ajanta experience and passed it on to the next generation. This will be substantiated below. In what is among the latest crves at Ajanta (cave No. 26) lies the most serene Parinirvana relief, wherein all the episodes, though arranged in compartments and dominated by the eternally dormant Buddha, yet they are unified in that moment when the Tathagata's soul is released soaring heavenwards, the long row of monks and lay followers are mourning underneath Buddha's couch while his most favourite and faithful pupil Ananda is near his master's feet completely overwhelmed by grief.[70]

Next to this final event of Buddha's life and in the same cave has been carved another epochal episode representing the moment of his achieving the long sought "enlightenment" just when he makes the earth-touching gesture as Mara vainly tries his utmost to frighten Gautama by the show of brute strength in the form of his heavily armed host of demons (depicted on either side of his seated figure) and failing which he sent his daughters to tempt him who are shown below Buddha's seat. One of them is shown in the centre in a provocative dancing posture, who develops into Parvati of Elephanta Kalyana-sundara and transforms into lucious female at Aurangabad.[71]

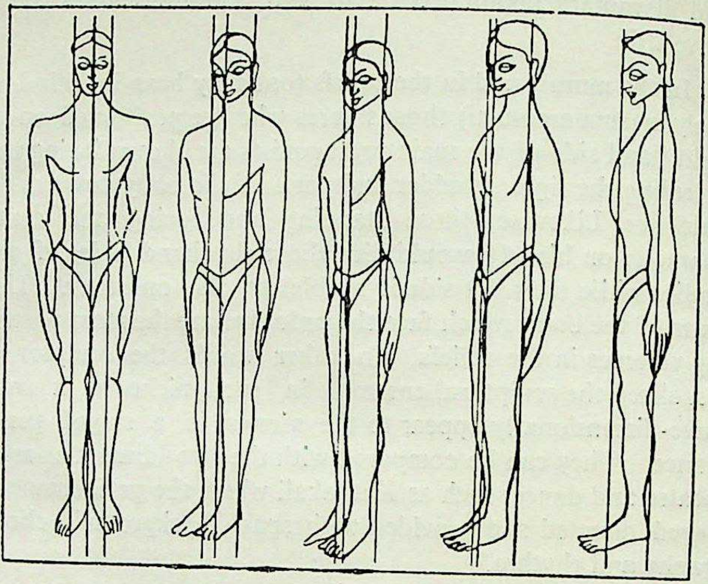
The "Temptation of Mara" is a two-tier composition, although planar in relief and rather looking congested, yet it is this scheme which was further developed at Elephanta in the "Ravana Shaking Kailasha'' and "Uma-Maheshwara" reliefs with greater sense of space and articulation of bodies. Another example of the two-tier composition is the Lakulish Yogeshwara. Once again the great "Ravana Shaking Kailash" relief at Ellora may be cited as the grandest of such "two-tier compositions". The earliest of these can be traced to the one at Karle called "Buddha at Gradrakuta" or "Transfiguration of Buddha" which is comparatively shallow, basically symmetrical and entirely frontal.[72] The lotus seated Yogeswara similar to the manner Buddha is represented at Gradhrakuta or in the "Miracle at Sravasti" is not only found at Elephanta where he is placed opposite Siva Nateswara, but also at the Kailash cave opposite the Bhairava and at Dumar Lena in Lakulisa form facing Nateswara.[73]

Taking into account the linearity of the treatment of the plastic form in the Elephanta reliefs, if they are visualised as linear compositions, for that is how they must have been designed by the sculptors to begin with, then we have one more of the similarities with Ajanta and this time with the frescoes. Again it can be construed that what was gained by the painters at Ajanta was put into practice in high relief by the sculptors at Elephanta for Ajanta frescoes presuppose a tremendous feeling for space and volume on the part of their creators.[74] In both the places the central character of the main protagonists are given dominent positions in the compositions using the hierarchical principle. The subsidiary figures or actions are grouped on either side of these protagonists and the space manipulated around them, in which they are contained. It is only logical that it should be first attempted on the two dimensional wall before working it out in the relief, so also the flowing linear rhythms of the body contours which bring together all those elements disposed in space and inter-weave them into a total all-pervading organic unity. To give some examples of Ajanta paintings containing above-mentioned features one may mention Buddha Preaching in the Congregation (cave ix), Hamsa Jataka and Visvantara Jakata (cave xvii) and Vidhurapandita Jataka (cave 2)[75]

In the murals and in the reliefs (one may bear in mind the Kalyanasundaramurti) those figures who are positioned on the right hand side of the main protagonists are shown facing them revealing the right shoulder and parts of the body towards the onlooker. Likewise, those standing and facing the central character on his left, would hide the right hand side of their bodies while their left side is visible to the onlooker. Those parts of the body which face the onlooker are the most portruding volumes in the reliefs. In other words the sculptor has visualized the sculptural ensemble in each niche as it would three-dimensionally appear to the viewer in a staged performance. They can be compared with the live dramatic art of theatre and dance, such as Kathakali where the performance is staged, directed and provided with space, background, choreography and rhythm.[76]

In their visualization of figural grouping both the painters and the sculptor drew from a common fund of knowledge about the human body, the different postures and their viewing points as they are described in such ancient treatises as Vishnudharmottara[77] and Nalacampu,[78] which are almost contemporary texts. In these texts the graduated shift in the contours from the front view to the profile is classified in five stages beginning from the straight erect body seen from the front called Rju, others are named as Ardharju, Sacika, Ardhavilocanna and Parsvagata, the last stands for the pure profile (See page 74). It is also important as Shivaramamurti observes that the silpa texts do not make very much difference between actual poses and views of the same postures.[79]

Yet another relationship that Elephanta has with Ajanta is significantly in the close resemblance between Siva as Natesvara and the Avalokiteșvara Padmapani. (cave I) Could we surmise that the former is derived from the latter? Only the upper portion of both these images is well preserved so that even the dancing Siva appears as if in tribhanga with a beautifully flexioned torso like that of the Padmapani. The leftward sway in the hip of Padmapani is echoed not only in the two standing Parvatis at Elephanta but also in the Ardhanari where the



Conjectured postures on the basis of silpa texts representing from left to right: Rju, Ardharju, Sacika, Ardhavilocana, Parsvagata. (Courtesy: Ashok Bhattacharya, Citralaksana, Calcutta, 1974)

stance is so loosened so as to appear in dance posture as in the Aihole Ravalphadi cave.[80] The dancing Siva does not represent the tandava but is in Lalitam posture of the Lasya variety. A fuller idea of its complete form and posture can be had in cave 14 (Ravana Ki Khai).[81] But from the line of my reasoning it would seem that Elephanta Natesvara is among the first of these rock reliefs variations of which appear subsequently at Badami, Ellora cave 14, (Ravana Ki Khai) cave 21 (Rameshwar) and cave 29 (Dhumar Lena). (Plates 28, 29, 30, and 31).

Both the Padmapani and the Dancing Siva have in common a benign, compassionate and inward-looking countenance. Continuing further with the comparison of facial types it may be noted that the refined, aristocratic solemn face of the Apsara in Ajanta[82] bedecked with jewellery and a stylish coiffure might have inspired the images of Uma/Vamdeva i.e. the female face on the left of the Maheshamurti as well as the

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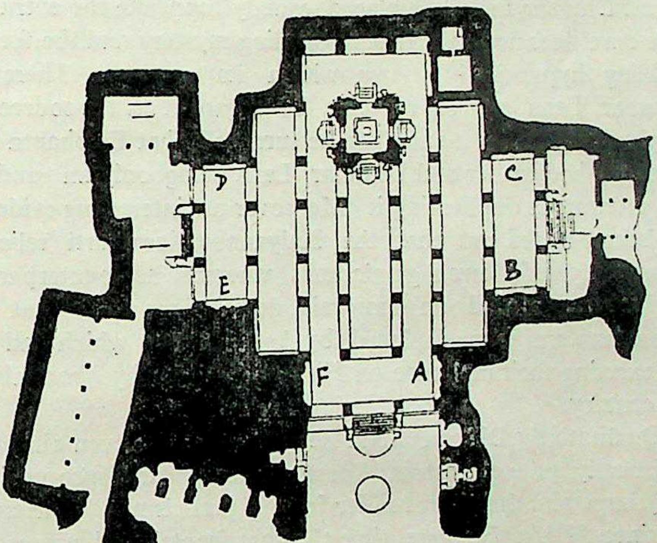
feminine side of Ardhanari's face. (Plates 22 and 23) Interestingly enough there is a close similarity between the central face of the Maheshamurti as well as all the seven faces of the Parel Siva in their repose, physiognomy and facial types. Similar also are the faces of the sculptures at Aurangabad whose feminine ideal however is too sensual than Elephanta. In the case of the facial resemblances, the lips of all of them are thick while the lower lip is protruding even in the face of Ajanta Padmapani.

The Dhumar Lena problem may be tackled now i.e. Elephanta vis-a-vis cave 29 of Ellora, because it has been tied up with the question of the dating of Elephanta. The identical floor plans of both these fully Saivite shrines have been noted



Ellora—Dhumar Lena, Floor plan

Sculptural reliefs

A : Ravana Shaking Kailash
B : Uma Maheshvara
C : Kalyana Sundara
D : Lakulish
E : Shiva Tandava
F : Bhairava

by many scholars before.[83] Both contain sandhara linga shrines with dvarapalas on all the four entrances. The reliefs cover same themes as those at Elephanta with the exception of Ardhanari and Gangadhara reliefs. Of course the major difference is in that Dhumar Lena does not have what is the most magnificent aspect of Elephanta i.e. the triple-headed image of Maheshamurti.. (See page 75 for its plan).

This is also noteworthy that as the visitor enters the cave at Elephanta he soon confronts the Maheshamurti image of which he becomes aware only gradually and alinged to the same wall flanking Maheshamurti are the reliefs depicting Ardhanari and Gangadhara together forming a vast and continuous tier. The lingam shrine here is on the right as one enters but at Dhumar Lena it is placed exactly opposite the entrance. This cave does not have that compelling mystery and the feeling of being hypnotically drawn within its expanse. Therefore Dhumar Lena can in no case be regarded as the source for Elephanta. Rather it can then be surmised that Elephanta was accomplished earlier and Dhumar Lena being only an audacious attempt at duplicating it. Moreover an interesting evidence has been pointed out that the Kalyanasundaramurti relief at Dhumar Lena follows Agamic texts whereas its counterpart at Elephanta is based on Pauranic descriptions and that the Pauranas were being replaced by Agamic texts which had began exerting their influence on Hindu iconography from about 8th century.[84]

Qualitatively Dhumar Lena sculptures are uneven although stylistically quite consistent. These reliefs appear disproportionately large and the figures suffer from giganticism in their crude heaviness.[85] At the same time they are frontal and possess an archaic rigidity which becomes more of a mannerism totally different from the naivete which is associated with the outcome of a fresh beginning. In spite of their bulk the space remains shallow. In photographs, when these reliefs are seen in reduced scale, the figures in them appear so curiously doll-like.[86] Perhaps these reliefs are rather the work of a crazy idiosyncratic master since Dhumar Lena sculptures themselves are quite unique in the whole range of Ellora sculptures. By contrast Elephanta sculptures are consistently of a high quality and the products of a single-minded vision, which I am inclined to think, must be due to a master mind who should be regarded as a towering genius under whose inspiration scores of craftsmen must have given their best.[87]

Elephanta reliefs combine narrative and episodic elements together with the aspect of "Darshana". The presentation of the episodes is like "Darshana" — as the Gods would appear to the observer or the worshipping bhakta. This idea of "Darshana" is different than the usual situation of a bhakta visiting a temple to have a darshana of the gods who is in the form of a deity, since Elephanta sculptures are much more than mere iconographic deities.

The sculptors have heavily drawn on the pauranic myths, it is in this sense that the narrative and the episodic aspect is more compelling than the rigid adherence to iconographic prescriptions and ensembles. The sculptors seem to have been urged on by the aspiration to see the gods as if they have become alive in episodic situations which, though taking place in mythological world, but yet given terrestrial settings as e.g. the mountainous "foreground" in the Ravana-anugraha and in the Uma Maheshwara reliefs, as well as in human situations as the marriage ceremony together with the bashful contentment of Parvati in Kalyana Sundara, and the feigning of feminine jeously by her as Siva proceeds to receive Ganga over his Jatabhara in the Gangadhara relief. Likewise in the Uma Maheshwara relief, noteworthy is Parvati's sulking posture during the well known "dice quarrel," whose gesture, since her arms are broken, can be guessed by refering to the similar relief at Ellora cave 21, in which she raises her right hand in the characteristic "*Vismaya mudra*" as if she is mocking at Siva whom she has just defeated at the dice game. Despite the representation of Siva as Mahayogi and the supreme god and his absorbtion within him of the Sakti, Parvati has been given equal prominence.

Parvatı appears in five of the eight reliefs besides the Maheshmurti. She appears in all the four reliefs on this wall beginning from the marriage scene followed by the Gangadharamurti. In the Maheshmurti she is represented as only one of the faces but she is triumphant in the Ardhanariswara due to the dominent female side just as Siva is triumphant in the Maheshwaramurti. Gangadharamurti relief is much more than an iconic from of Siva which rather narrates the story of the "Descent of the Ganga" emphasising the discomfiture of Parvati as her husband pays attention to another woman.[88] The conceit of the demure Paravati is so elegantly portrayed through her downward gaze and a pronounced leftward sway answering the concept of Lavanya according to Sanskrit poetics. Indeed, the tribhanga positions of each of these two figures in opposite directions creates a wide distance between the two as if they are drifting apart yet these very stances result in a rhomboid shaped parallelogram so as once again establish a unity between the two figures. It is remarkable as to how such a monumental relief was created based on poetic conceit. This brings out Parvati's image as an enticing heavenly apsara as depicted in the puranas as well as in the reliefs.

In a recent mythological study, the mutual attraction between Siva and Parvati has been interestingly interpreted which has a bearing on their depiction in the Elephanta reliefs. Siva is engaged in tapas because he desires Sati (after Sati burnt herself to death in the Daksha episode). Meanwhile, Parvati (who is Sati reborn) is engaged in penances so that Siva may consent to marry her. Tapas is performed to free onself from desire yet Siva is absorbed in the thoughts of Devi even though it needs the intervention of Kama (desire incarnate) and Parvati's beauty to persuade Siva to marry her. This is the motif of ascetic seduced by Apsara which runs through the Siva-Parvati myths.[89]

Elephanta sculptures are not mere pratimas but they admirably combine iconic form with idea and image in the sense expounded by Niharranjan Ray.[90] The credit of this achievement must necessarily be given to the genius of an individual master who could be named as the Elephanta master as was the accomplishment of the Sarnath master in creating the Sarnath Buddhas.[91] For achieving such aesthetically marvellous integration of form with content, of image with idea, for the subtle nuances and variations of expressions and moods, Elephanta (together with Brahmanical Ellora) represents a high water mark in the development in Indian sculpture surpassing even Egyptian and Greek sculptural traditions since in the former symbolic references are not integrated in the sculptural form whereas in the latter, sculpture is deprived of all symbolism.

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13. A.K. Coomaraswamy, Dance of Shiva, New York, 1918.
(Also quoted by Gopinath Rao, Ibid.)

14. J.N. Bannerji, Development of Hindu Iconography, Calcutta, 1956.

15. C. Shivaramamurti, Nataraja, New Delhi, 1974.

16. C. Shivaramamurti, Satarudriya: Vibhuti of Shiva's Iconography New Delhi, 1976. In this book Shivaramamurti has shown the significance of Satarudriya in the evolution of Shaiva Iconography and with its help he has re-interpreted many of the already known iconographic forms of Shiva.

17 R.G. Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Minor Religious Systems, Strassburg, 1913.

18. The story of Marriage of Siva and Parvati is told in the Varaha Purana and Skanda Purana as well as in Kumarsambhav. The story of Ganga's Descent is given in Vishnu Purana, Bhagwata Purana and the Ramayana. The descriptions are given in Amsumadbhedagama and Kamikagama. Account of Andhakasura and the Matrikas is given in the Varaha Purana and Kurma Purana. Its description is found in the Suprabhedagama. The account of Ardhanariswara is given in Siva Purana and iconographic descriptions in Amsumadbhedagama, Kamikagama and Suprabhedagama. The event of Lingodbhava is narrated in the Linga Purana. The concept of Trimurti is expounded in Vayu Purana and the iconography of Maheshmurti and Sadashiva are described in Vishnudhar-

amottara Purana. Nrityamurtis are described in the Bharata Natya Sastra, the Amsumadbhedagama and the Uttarakamikagama.

19. Vishnudharamottara Purana.
    (i) Edited by S. Kramrisch, calcutta, 1924.
    (ii) Edited by Piryabala Shah, Baroda, 1958-1961.

20. This and other Agamic texts which contain material pertaining to Shaiva Iconography have been referred to by Gopinath Rao in his Elements of Hindu Iconography.

21. See Kumarasambhav of Kalidasa, F. Kingsbury and G.E. Phillips, Hymns of the Tamil Saivite saints, Calcutta, 1921.

22. J. Marshall, Mohan-jo-Daro and the Indus Valley civilization, London, 1931.

23. Ibid.

24. J.N. Bannerji, Op. cit.

25. J.C. Harle, Gupta sculpture. Oxford, 1974.

26. J.N. Bannerji, Op. cit.

27. H. Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art, New York, 1963.

28. (i) Stella Kramrisch, The image of Mahadeva in the cave temple on Elephanta Island; Ancient India No. 2, 1946.
    (ii) Krishna Kumar, A Dhyanayoga Maheshmurti and some reflections on the Maheshmurti Images. Artibus Asias, Vol. XXXVIII 1-2. 1975.

29. S.N. Chaturvedi, A note on the Mahadeva image of Elephanta, Bulletin of Museums and Archaeology in U.P., Dec.'71.

30. S. Kramrisch, Art of India.

31. (i) C. Shivaramamurti, Satarudriya.
    (ii) B.N. Sharma, Iconography of Sadashiva, New Delhi, 1975.

32. Shivaramamurti, Nataraja.

33. U.P. Shah, The Sculptures of Samlaji and Roda, Baroda Museum Bulletin, 19.

34. See the various Mukhalings as at Udaigiri, Nachna Kuthara, Bhita, Bhumra, Koh etc.

35. This image is reproduced in "The Sacred and Secular in Indian Art", Univesity of California, Santa Barbara, 1974 and in Harle, Gupta Sculpture. Recently S.W. Siddiqui has discovered what appears to be an earlier, Kushan version of the same image.

36. C. Shivaramamurti, Nataraja.

37. A.K. Coomaraswamy in his Dance of Shiva essay for the first time gave a cogent interpretation of the representation of cosmic dance of Siva in the Nataraja images.

38. For illustrations see Shivaramamurti, Op. cit.

39. Ibid.

40. The torso is "quivering with life" as had been observed by Michaelangelo's contemporaries in his sculptures and paintings especially the drawing of the back of a male torso. See Vasari, Lives of most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, London, 1912-14.

41. For some other versions see, Aschwin Lippe, Early Chalu kian Icons, Artibus Asiae, Vol. XXXIV, 4, 1972.

42. Many of them are reproduced in Shivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, New Delhi, 1963.

43. The story of "Ravana Shaking Kailash" is told in the Ramayana.

44. Nihartanjan Ray, Idea and Image.

45. Andre Malraux also has paid his homage to the Maheshamurti in La Sculpture Mondiales, Paris, 1953.

46. Amita Ray in her Aurangabad Caves, Calcutta, 1966, has not brought into her discussion the sculptures at Elephanta.

47. R.D. Bannerji, Bas reliefs of Badami, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 25, 1928.

48. R.S. Gupte, Aihole, Bombay 1967.

49. (i) A.K. Coomaraswamy, History of India and Indonesian Art, New York, 1927.

(ii) Benjamin Rowland, Art and Architecture of India, Baltimore, 1970.

50. (i) J. Burgess, The Rock-Temples of Elephanta, Bombay, 1871.

(ii) J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, The Cave Temples of India, London, 1880.

(iii) S.N. Chakravarti, The Image of Brahma from Elephanta, Lalitkala, 1-2, 1955-56.

51. H. Goetz, The chronology of Ellora, Artibus Asiae—1952.

52. Muriel Neff, Marg, Sept. 1960.

53. R. Von Leyden, Marg. Sept. 1960.

54. K. Khandalawala, Notes in third revised and enlarged edition of Vincent Smith's Fine Arts in India and Ceylon, Bombay, n.d.

55. C. Shivaramamurti (i) Nataraja

(ii) 5000 years of Indian Art.

For a study of Vakataka inscriptions see V.V. Mirashi, Vakataka Rajavansh Ka Itihas Tatha Abhilekh (Hindi) Varanasi, 1964. From the inscriptions it is established that Ajanta, Cave XVI and the nearby Gototkach cave were commissioned during the rule of Vakataka King, Harishena, towards the end of the 5th century.

56. See page 12 of Shastri's original text. Promod Chandra in his Elephanta, Bombay, revised edition, 1960, has agreed with Shastri's contention of early date yet he placed it as late as early seventh century.

57. Walter Spink, Ajanta to Ellora, Ann Arbor, 1967 and also Marg, March 1967. (He has articles on Elephanta, Jogeshwari and the Kalachuris which are not accessible to the present author.) Spink and Muriel Neff, op.cit, have done elaborate comparative analysis of the plans and pillar types in the Deccan Cave Shrines, consideration of which has been left out by the present author. But however, the author would like to acknowledge the stimulating though brief discussion he had with Walter Spink on his researches during his visit to Baroda.

58. A.K. Coomaraswamy, History of India and Indonesian Art.

59. Zimmer, Art of Indian Asia.

60. Illustration in R.S. Gupte; Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad; Bombay, 1962.

61. Reproduced in Harle, Gupta sculpture.

62. Reproduced in Gupte; Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad.

63. Attention to such qualities at Devgarh, which is a 5th century monument, is drawn by Benjamin Rowland, op. cit.

64. Zimmer, op. cit.

65. A.K. Coomaraswamy, Origin of the Buddha Image.

66. M.N. Deshpande, Rockcut caves of Pithalkhora in the Deccan. Ancient India, No: 15, 1959.

67. Marshall and Foucher, The Monuments of Sanchi; London, n.d.

68. H. Wolflin, Principles of Art History, New York, n.d.

69. Gupte, Ajanta, Ellora, Auraugabad.

70. Reproduced in G. Yazdani and others, Ajanta, 3 vols. Oxford, 1931-46.

71. For illustrations see Amita Ray, Aurangabad caves.

72. A.K. Coomaraswamy, Elements of Buddhist Iconography, Cambridge 1935.

73. It seems that the Saivism prevalent in Western India and Deccan during the centuries when Elephanta and other Brahmanical monuments were constructed was based on the Pashupata cult, the founder of which was Lakulish who is mentioned in Vayu Purana. For further details see R.D. Bhandarkar, Annual Report, Archaeological survery of India, 1906-7; and K.D. Panigrahi, Sculptural Representations of Lakulisa and other Pashupata Teachers—Journal of Indian History, XXXVIII, 3 (1960) Representations of Lakulish are carved on the reliefs over the entrances to the Jogeshwari caves in Bombay which are contemporary of Elephanta. (Reproduced in Marg, Sept. 1960). There are also enough evidences of Gupta and Vakataka ruling families as worshippers of Siva, especially from their "Prasasti" inscriptions.

74. Volume and space are already implied in the way painting is refered to as Chitrabhasa, Chitra meaning sculpture proper. (Sukranitisara.)

75. Yazdani, Plates XVIII, XVII, XXIII and XXXV.

76. R. Von Leyden, op. cit., See also Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts, New Delhi, 1968.

77. Vishnudharamottara Purana, ed. Priyabala Shah.

78. Shivaramamurti, Artist's jottings from the Nalacampu of Trivikrama, Journal of Oriental Research, Vol. VIII. 1934. The important topic of the different stances of the human figure and their representation in painting and sculpture is a recurring theme in the ancient Silpa texts, starting from Vishnudharamottara, Abhilasitartha Cintamani, etc. See also Asok Bhattacharya, Chitralaksana, a treatise on Indian Painting, Calcutta, 1974.

79. Shivaramamurti, op. cit.

80. The sculptures in the Raval Phadi cave must be dated after 654/5 when Vikramaditya I was able to restore the Chalukyan Empire following the defeat at the hands of the Pallavas. See Aschwin Lippe—Early

Chalukyan Icons, Artibus Asiae, Vol. XXXIV. 4, 1972. The Ardhanari at Elephanta must be regarded as an earlier example of the image with a loosened stance.

81. Shivaramamurti, Nataraja.

82. Yazdani, Ajanta, cave XVIII. Plate LXX II.

82. (i) K.R. Srinivasan, Temples of South India, New Delhi, 1971.

(ii) Muriel Neff, op. cit.

84. R. Sen Gupta, The Panels of Kalyanasundaramurti at Ellora, Lalitkala, No. 7, 1960.

85. Even Aschwin Lippe, op. cit, has observed that Dhumar Lena Natesa 'is awakwardly short and thick limbed.........,'.

86. See reproductions in Gupte; Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad.

87. I am assuming a free mobility of craftsmen who seem to have been basically itinerant and thereby helped in dissemination of art forms and styles as proved by R.N. Misra in Ancient Artists and Art Activity, Simla, 1975. Such an assumption is also made by Goetz—op. cit. and K.R. Srinivasan, op. cit.

88, The other woman is Ganga who according to some Puranas was already married to Siva. See Wendy O'Flaherty—Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva. The "Synoptic" and "Iconic" depiction of the Gangadharamurti in the Ravalphadi cave at Aihole also serves as a contrast to the episodic narrative aspect of its representation at Elephanta.

89. Wendy O'Flaherty, op. cit.

90. Niharranjan Ray, Idea and Image.

91. M. Rosenfield, On the Dated carvings of Saranath, Artibus Asiae Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (1963).

(Professor Walter Spink has conveyed that the central 'tatpurusha' face of the Maheshamurti at Elephanta is facing northward but not eastward as it ought to be according to Sastras, since the present entrance faces the north. I may add that the rock into which the cave was cut in is in an alignment where it can only have a northward entrance. As the main linga shrine ought to face the east, it was given its due place inside the cave and an additional entrance porch was created on the eastern side of the cave which, however, could not be used for entry by the devotees. As counterpart of above alternative was to position the principal face of the Maheshamurti in the northward direction so that the devotee entering from the north could be face to face it as he made his way toward it. I would also like to express my gratitude to Shri Shivaramamurti for having gone through an earlier version of the manuscript of this essay. R.P.)

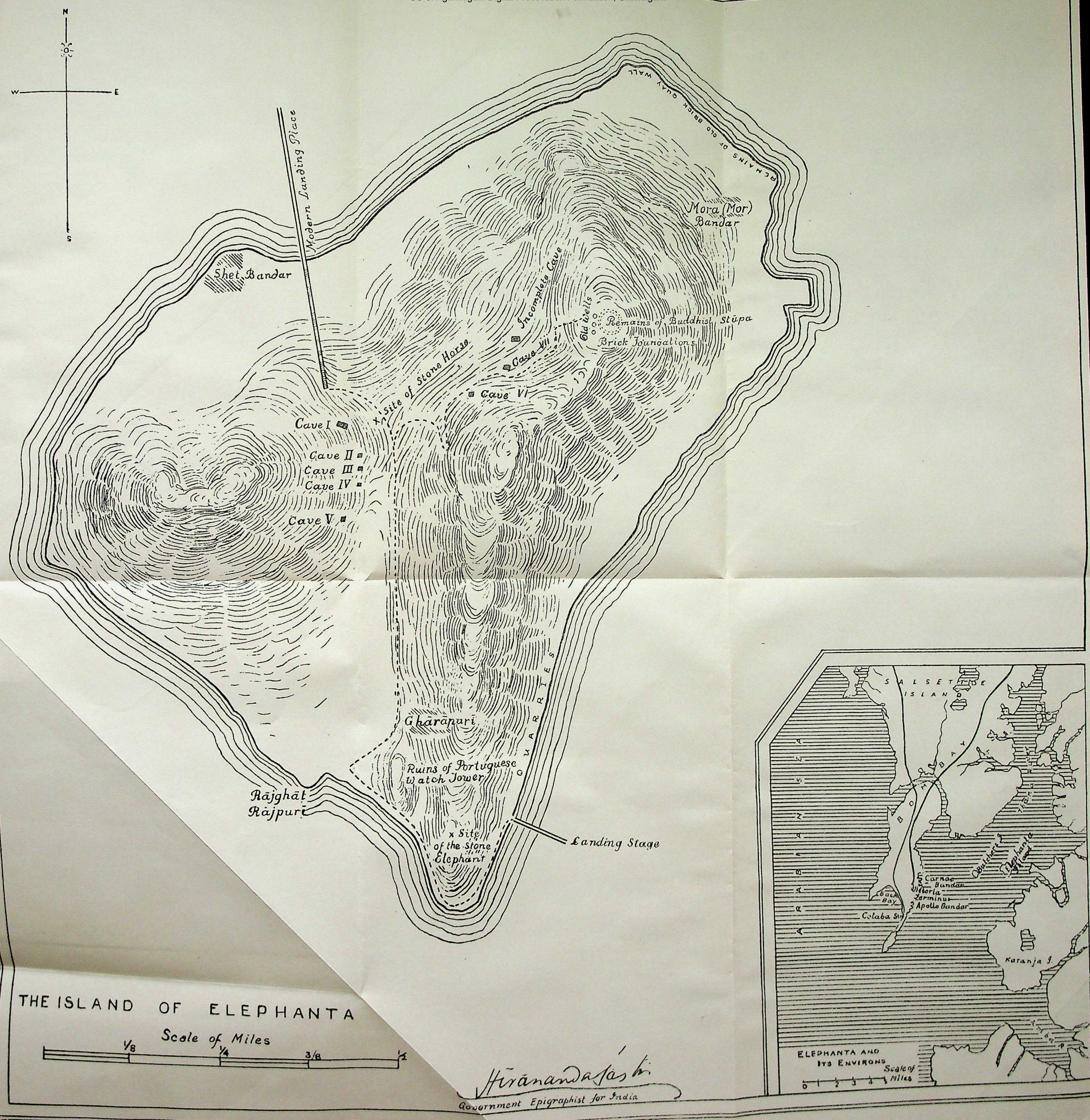
ERRATA

Page 18 Line 19 to line 22 (In an.........Brahma) is an editorial insertion by R.P.

		Incorrent	correct
Page 18	line 21	½	1/2
Page 54	line 3	acient	ancient
Page 59	line 22	and	an
Page 62	line 20	to	two
	line 31	gently	gentle
		and	are
	line 32	21	4
	line 36	Ardhanarisava	Ardhanarisvara

Titles of Plates:

Plate 11	delete Playing	
Plate 16	Mathura	Matrika
Plate 20	Aganta	Ajanta
Plate 21	Sumdaramurti	Sundaramurti
Plate 22) Plate 23)	Titles are interchanged	
Plate 29	Nataraj	Nataraja


N
W
E
S
Modern Landing Place
Remains of old brick quay wall
Mora (Mor) Bandar
Shet Bandar
Incomplete Cave
Old wells
Remains of Buddhist Stūpa
Brick foundations
Site of Stone Horse
Cave VII
Cave VI
Cave I
Cave II
Cave III
Cave IV
Cave V
Gharapuri
Quarries
Ruins of Portuguese Watch Tower
Rājghāṭ
Rājpurī
Site of the Stone Elephant
Landing Stage
1/8
1/4
3/8
1
SALSETTE ISLAND
ARABIAN SEA
BOMBAY
BOMBAY
Butchers I.
Elephanta Island
Carnac Bandar
Victoria Terminus
Apollo Bandar
Back Bay
Colaba Stn
Karanja I.
Scale of Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5

THE ISLAND OF ELEPHANTA

Scale of Miles

ELEPHANTA AND ITS ENVIRONS

Hirananda Sastri
Government Epigraphist for India

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